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Al-Idrisi
Book of Roger (C. 12)

The memory of Islamic Madrid was about to be lost and without memory there is just emptiness, non-existence. The only capital city in Europe of Islamic origin must rediscover its past and publicize it, investigate all its traces, the remains it left behind, and unashamedly celebrate its cross-cultural, diverse and inclusive idiosyncrasy.

Cherif Abderrahman Jah
President of the Islamic Culture Foundation (FUNCI)



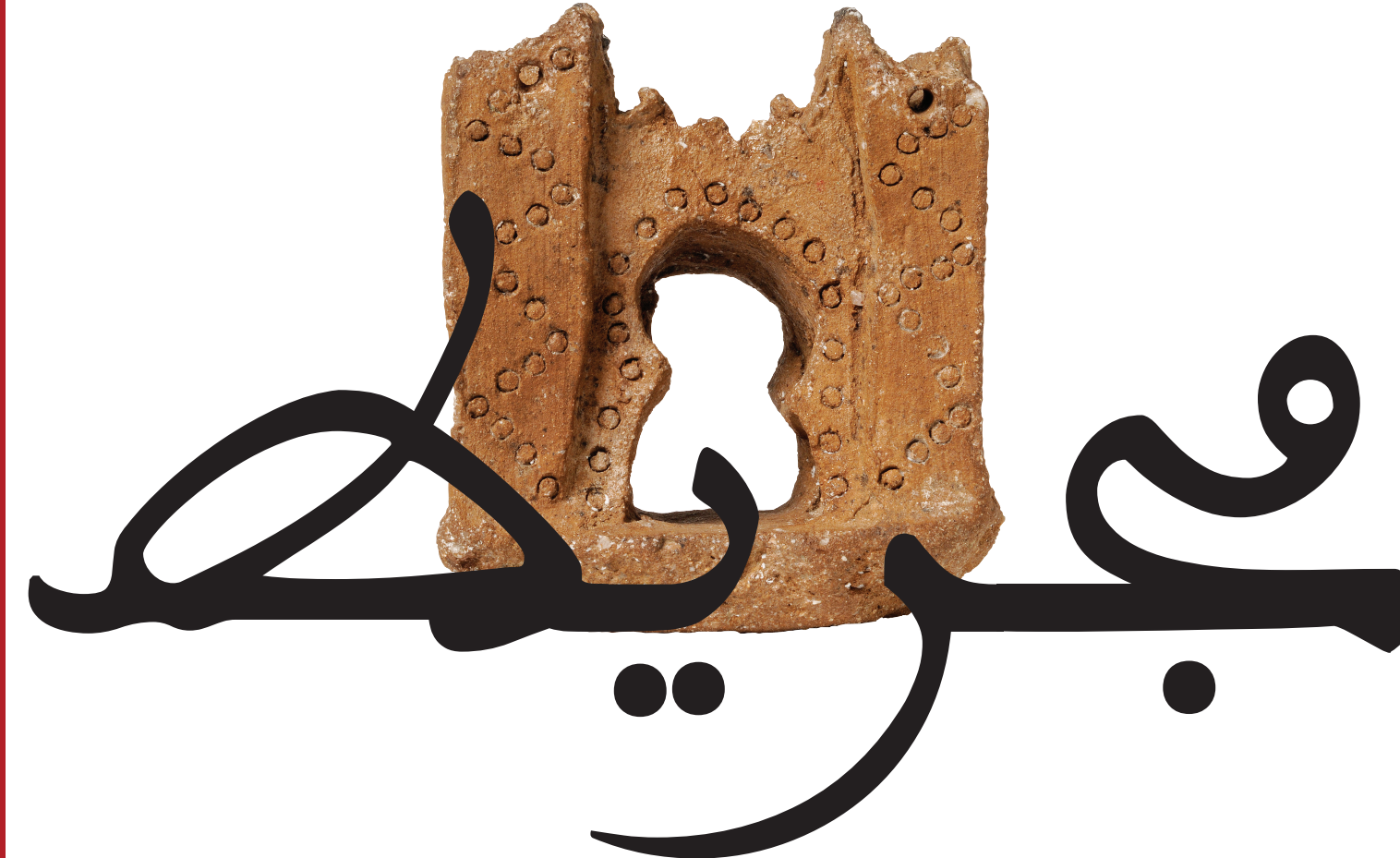
DANIEL GIL-BENUMEYA

ISLAMIC MADRID. A Rediscovered History

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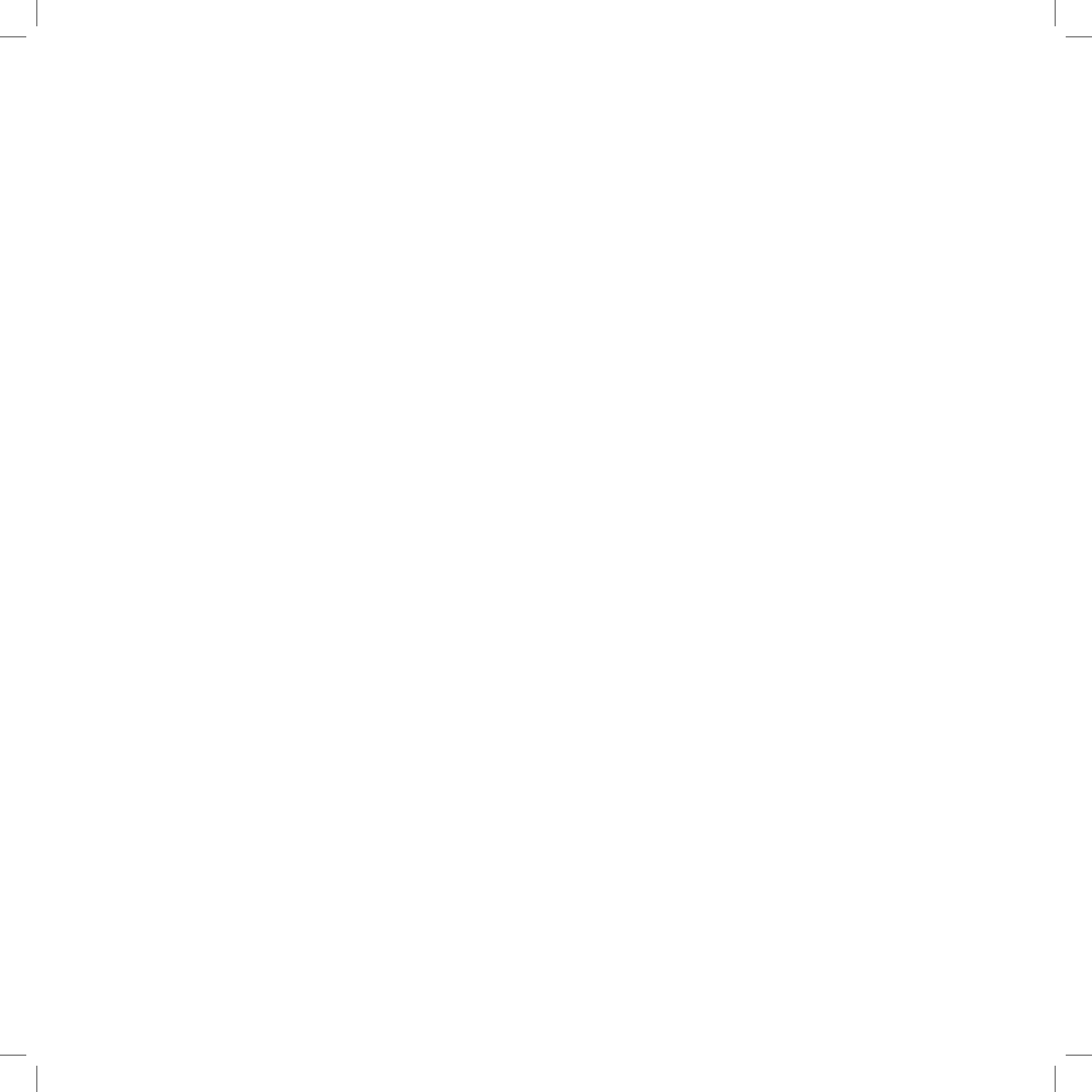
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His work focuses on the history and current situation of relations between Europe and Islam, and in particular on the discourses, representations and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that have been produced within the framework of this historical relationship. Among other works, Daniel Gil-Benumeya was the editor of a book by various authors entitled *De Maýrit a Madrid: Madrid y los árabes, del siglo IX al siglo XXI*, (From *Majrit* to Madrid: Madrid and the Arabs, from the 9th to the 21st century) which was published in Spanish and Arabic (Casa Árabe and Lunverg, 2011 and 2012) and the author of a monographic study called *Madrid islámico* (Islamic Madrid) (La Librería, 2015). He has also written various articles about the historic presence of Islam in Madrid and of course the first edition of this book, which was published by Madrid City Council and the Islamic Culture Foundation in 2018.

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Islamic Madrid

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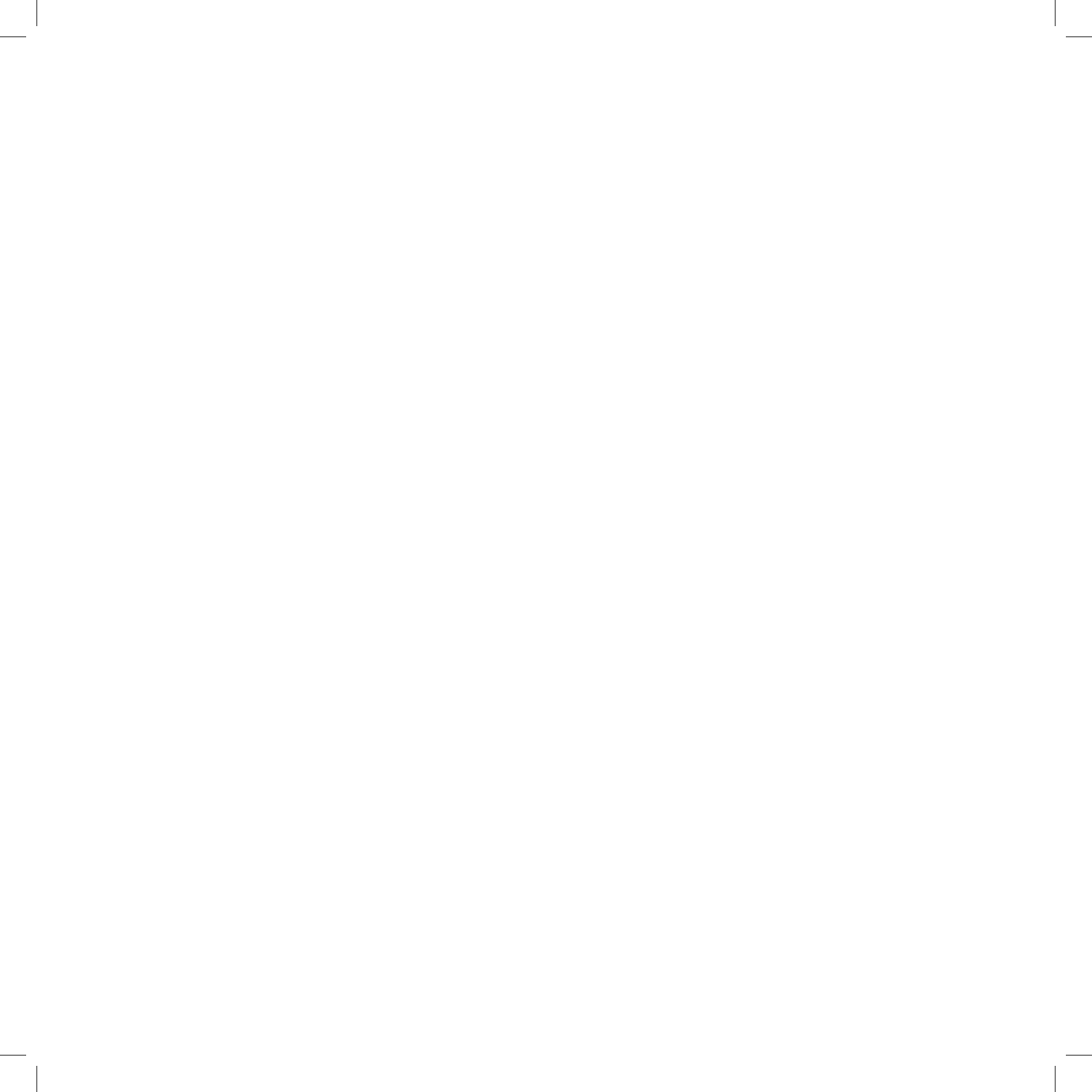
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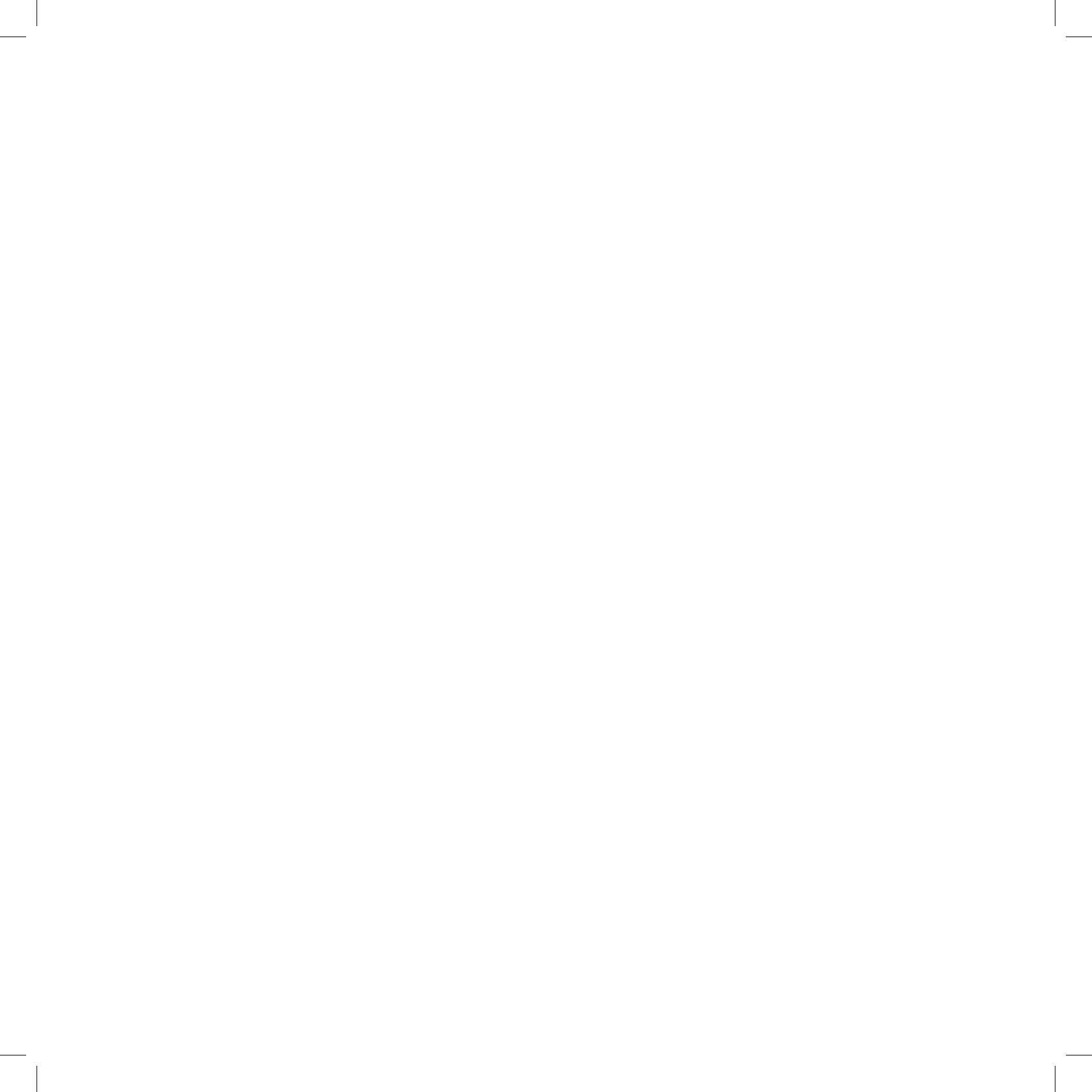
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Prologue to the English Edition

The first edition of this book was released to coincide with the festivities to mark the month of Ramadan 2018. We said then that the fact that in Madrid and its surrounding region almost 300,000 people were celebrating the holy month of Islam was proof that the Spanish capital is open to the world and has integrated one of humanity's most important cultural traditions into its daily life, much as this may grieve some people. We quoted Juan Goytisolo, who had died a few months earlier, who said that the necessary condition to enable culture and civilization to be truly alive and to bear their best fruit lies in coming together, hybridization and change, rather than in fixed identities or in the defence of essentialisms. Curiosity, mixing and moderation were the original ingredients in the recipe of classical Islamic cultural heritage and within that of Andalusian civilization. This chapter of Spanish history, which is not always kindly treated, is what the Islamic Culture Foundation (Fundación de Cultura Islámica) has been defending now for almost four decades, not only because of its historic value but also and above all because of the dialogue it can establish with the present day in many different fields, and in particular with regard to interculturalism.

Many people think that the presence of Islam in Madrid is something new, something that arrived thanks to the migrations at the end of the 20th century. To some extent this is true. This is what happened in other great cities of Europe and we should be happy that Madrid too has opened up to the world. However, if we step back to view things from a broader historical perspective, we find that the presence of Islam in our city is neither new nor foreign. On the contrary, it is so deeply rooted in the history of Madrid that it could be argued that Madrid is the only capital city of Islamic origin in Europe today. And not only that, but also that its Islamic roots go back further than some of the iconic cities in the history of Islam such as Istanbul or Cairo. How is this possible?

Madrid was born in the mid-9th century as a small town on the northern frontier of al-Andalus, and was therefore situated on the remote edge of the immense mediaeval Islamic world, which extended almost to China in the East and to the Sahara Desert in the South. When the city was founded with the still mysterious name of Majrit given to it by the Arabic Chronicles, Istanbul was still Byzantium and almost a century was to pass before the foundation of Cairo. Majrit was a part of al-Andalus for two and a half centuries and even after it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Castile, it still maintained a significant Muslim presence for a further 500 years.

The tangible and intangible remains of this part of our history are quite modest and very little-known, both to locals and to those who visit the city. This is why the Centre for the Study of Islamic Madrid (CEMI) was launched in 2017, as a project of the Islamic Culture Foundation (FUNCI) with the aim of disseminating and promoting the historic, artistic and cultural heritage of Islamic Madrid, both from the Andalusian era when Madrid was under Muslim rule and that related with the minority Islamic presence in the centuries after its conquest by the Christians. With this, we also want to help people realize that cross-cultural mixing has been an inherent characteristic of Madrid ever since its foundation. For the people of this city as a whole, it is a way of becoming aware that diversity is not something recent or imported and instead is a characteristic common to all human history. For the Muslims of modern-day Madrid, it is also a way of feeling prouder of and even more closely associated with their city.

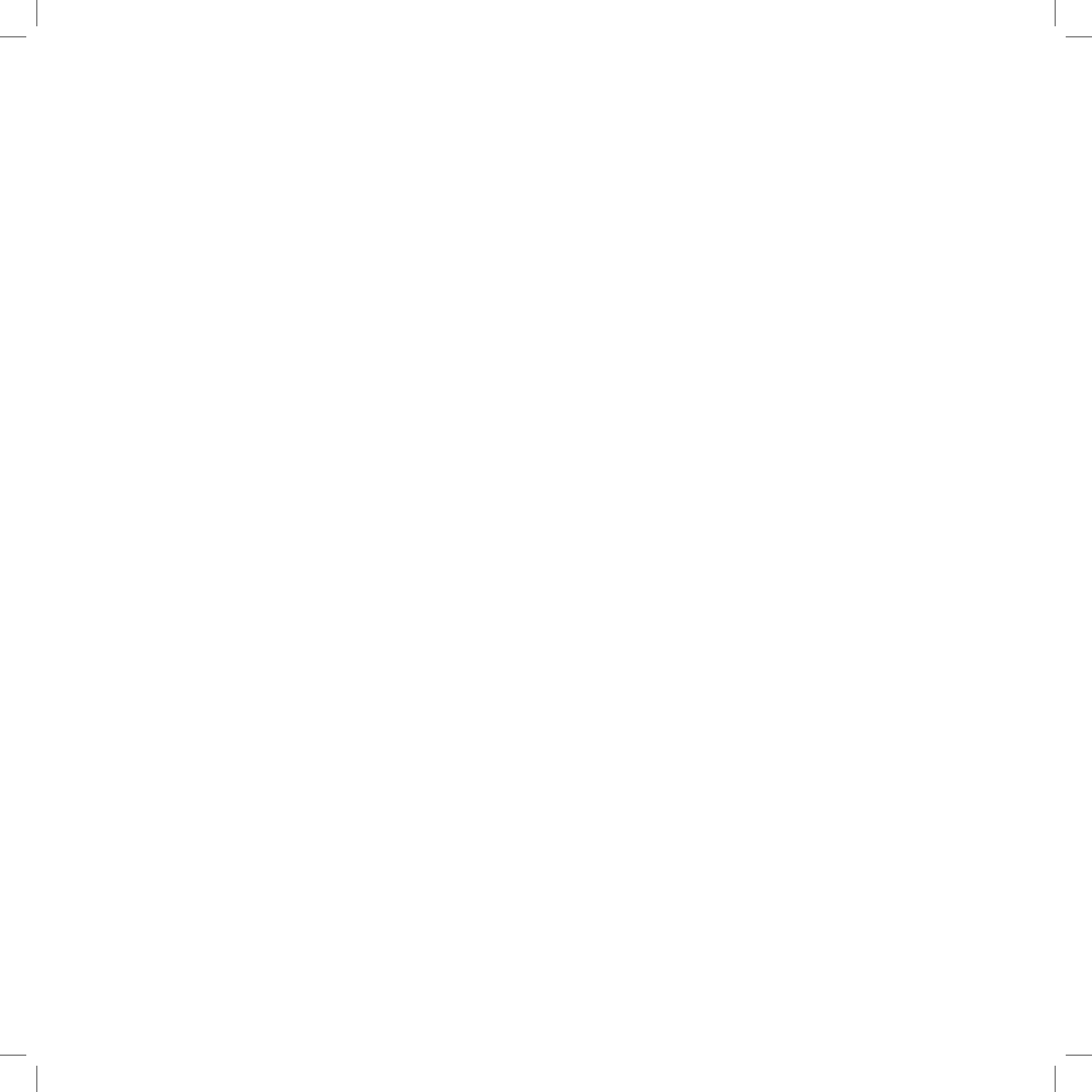
The first edition of *Islamic Madrid: A Rediscovered History* had a short life, given that the interest it aroused and the fact that it was distributed free of charge by Madrid City Council led to it selling out in just over a week. Two years on, our collaboration with the Dar Al Thaqafah publishing house has enabled us to produce a second corrected edition of this work, which includes new information and which has also been translated into Arabic and English.

Much of this book is based on original research by the author and/or the CEMI. Nonetheless, and given that the quest for knowledge is always a collective endeavour, we are much indebted to previous authors and their research. As this book is meant to be informative rather than academic and therefore contains only a limited number of footnotes, we would like to place on record here the importance of all these previous research studies. And in particular those by María Jesús Viguera Molins, Manuel Retuerce Velasco, Christine Mazzoli-Guintard, Juan Carlos de Miguel Rodríguez, Luis Caballero Zoreda and José Manuel Castellanos, among others, who have been collaborating with the CEMI ever since it was first set up.

We hope that this new edition will arouse the interest of the reader and will help stir their curiosity about what the *Chronicles* described as this “notable city of al-Andalus”, which still lives on in present-day Madrid.

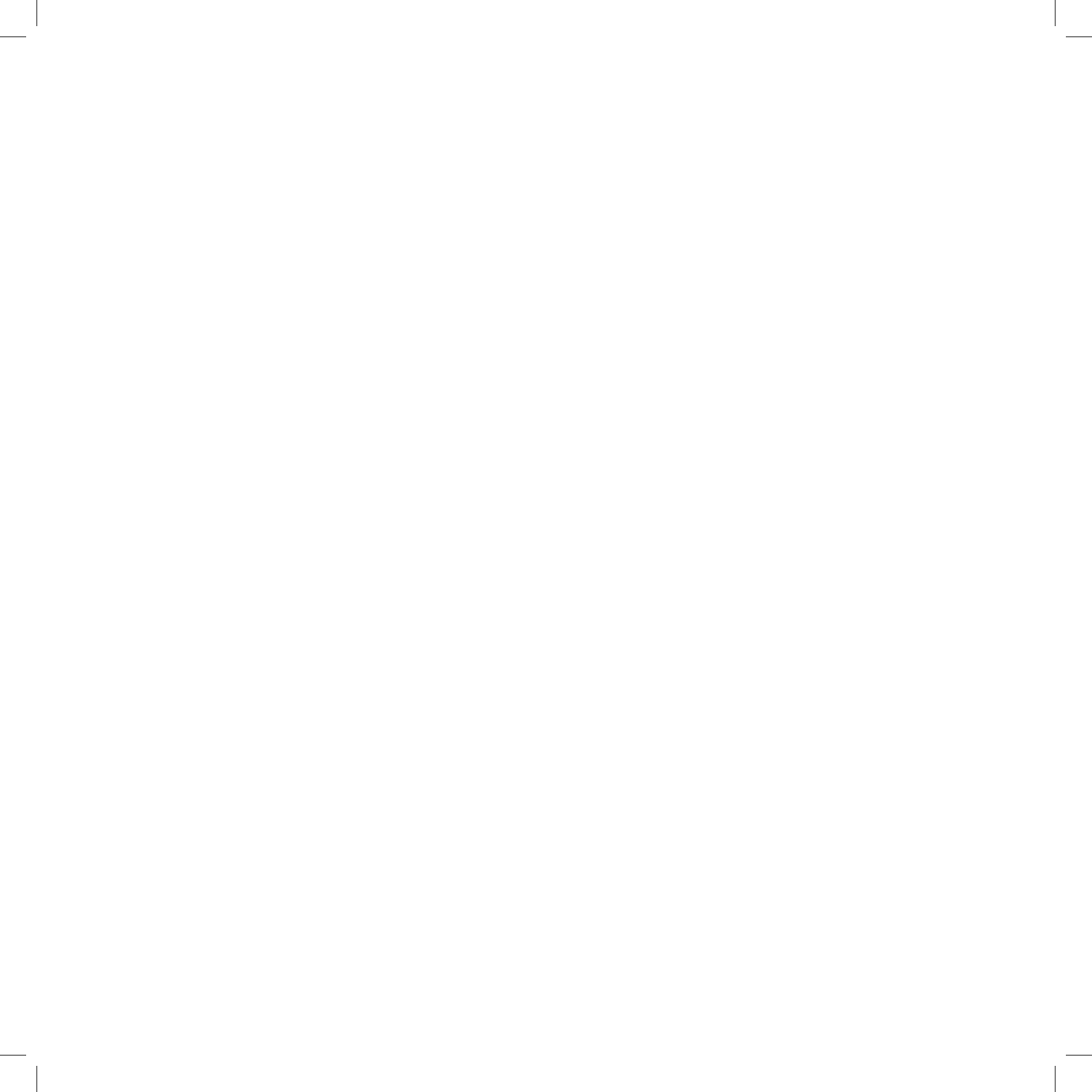
Centre for the Study of Islamic Madrid

Majrit/Madrid, Rajab 1441, March 2020.



Majrit,

a town in al-Andalus



Among the towns situated at the foot of these mountains is *Majrit*, a small town and a powerful, prosperous fortress. In the times of Islam, it had a great mosque where the sermon was regularly preached.¹

Al-Idrisi

The word *Majrit*, the name with which Madrid first entered history, is made up of five Arabic letters: *Mim*, *jim*, *ra*, *ya*, *ta*. It first appeared in a chronicle that was destined to survive written by the Cordoba historian, Ahmad al-Razi, entitled *Akhbar muluk al-Andalus* (*News about the Kings of al-Andalus*), although the Castilians abbreviated it to *Chronicle of Rasis the Moor*. Al-Razi claimed that the city was founded at the behest of Muhammad I, the fifth independent Emir of al-Andalus, an idea that he expounded in the flattering terms that the official chroniclers chose to bestow on the inhabitants of the Royal Palace of Cordoba:

Many beautiful building works are owing to Muhammad in his reign, and many great deeds, great triumphs and bounteous care for the wellbeing of the Muslims, always concerned about his frontiers, guarding against any breaches, consolidating his most far-flung domains and attending to their needs. It was he who ordered the building of the castle of Esteras (*Istirash*), to store the harvests of Medinaceli (*Madinat Salim*) and which lies on the north-west side of it. And it was he who built for the people of the frontier of Toledo (*Tulaytula*) the castle of Talamanca (*Talamanka*), the castle of Madrid (*Majrit*) and the castle of Peñahora (*Binna Furata*).²



Andalusian coins: Dinar, Third-Dinar and Dirham, 9th-11th centuries. Unknown origin. Museo de San Isidro. [Photos: Pablo Linés Viñuales and MSI]

History is normally attributed to kings and queens, but real history is made by the people. So who were those “people of the frontier of Toledo” for whom the Emir built so many castles? By the time Muhammad I came to the throne in September 852 almost a century and a half had passed since the adventure of al-Andalus³ first got underway. The story goes like this: in the year 711, a contingent of Arab and Berber troops crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and in less than three years occupied almost the entire Iberian Peninsula, which fell under the authority of the Caliph of Damascus, encountering virtually no resistance on their way. The Arabs were from Syria, Arabia and Yemen and in their expansion westwards had recruited the *imazighen* or Berbers to their cause. The latter were native peoples of north-west Africa who had already crossed the Strait on many previous occasions. The Iberian Peninsula was known as *Spania* or *Hispania* by the native peoples and as *al-Andalus* by the new arrivals, a name of uncertain origin. The Christian Chronicles described these events as a *loss*; while the Muslims spoke of *fath* or “liberation” from the tyranny of the Goths. In this way the two sides began a debate that would take shape centuries later when historians began to consider the place that should be occupied by al-Andalus within the Spanish national identity. The truth was

that in a very short time the new arrivals, who were a minority compared to the local population, brought about a cultural revolution that would endure for several centuries. The different cultures mixed: the Arabic language, which was no longer that of the conquerors but instead that of the ruling minority, coexisted for centuries alongside Romance as the language of the people and gradually replaced it as the language of culture. Islam extended even more quickly, embracing both the common people and the Hispano-Gothic elite. The Arabic and Berber tribes settled in large numbers, building new cities or reconstructing old Roman forts and roads, and mixed with the local population, while holding onto their family linages which descended from the Upper Euphrates, the Yemen and the edges of the Sahara Desert.

This mixing of the different populations did not however lead to territorial or political unity. Throughout the Peninsula, tribes, clans and adventurers of various origins created independent fiefdoms, establishing a border at every step. This tendency was especially strong in the *thugur* or “marches”, peripheral regions with rapidly fluctuating boundaries, in which the official government had to compete with local lords of castles and cities. Tribes, linages and groups with different backgrounds established all kinds of complex alliances and rivalries and shifted constantly between



Remains of Alboer Castle in Villamanrique de Tajo. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

accepting the authority of the governors in Cordoba and rebelling against them or vice versa. In the year 740 (122 in the Islamic calendar) encouraged by the rebellion that the Berber Chief Maysara had unleashed in Tangier against the Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus, the Berbers from the north of the Peninsula rose up in arms against their Arab Chiefs, pushing them back towards the centre of the Peninsula. For a long time, the Duero region was a no man's land

between the dominions of the Kings of Asturias and those of al-Andalus, which lay to the south of the chain of mountains known as the Sistema Central. We might perhaps wonder what became of these rebellious Berbers. It seems that they settled for good on the land near the River Duero, blending in with the local population and were never heard of again, but that's another story.

For centuries then, the Sistema Central marked the northern border of al-Andalus. This was a frontier zone, which the Andalusians called *al-Thagr al-Awsat*, "the Middle March" or "Middle Frontier". They also referred to it as *al-Sherrat*, "las sierras", an arabization of the Romance word *serra*. This region was traversed by two important routes. One was the old Roman road linking *Marida* (Mérida), *Tulaytula* (Toledo) and *Saraqusta* (Zaragoza), while the other was created by the Andalusians and ran north from Toledo along the River Guadarrama to the mountain pass of Tablada, where it crossed the Sierra de Guadarrama and continued on towards the River Duero. The Arabic name for this

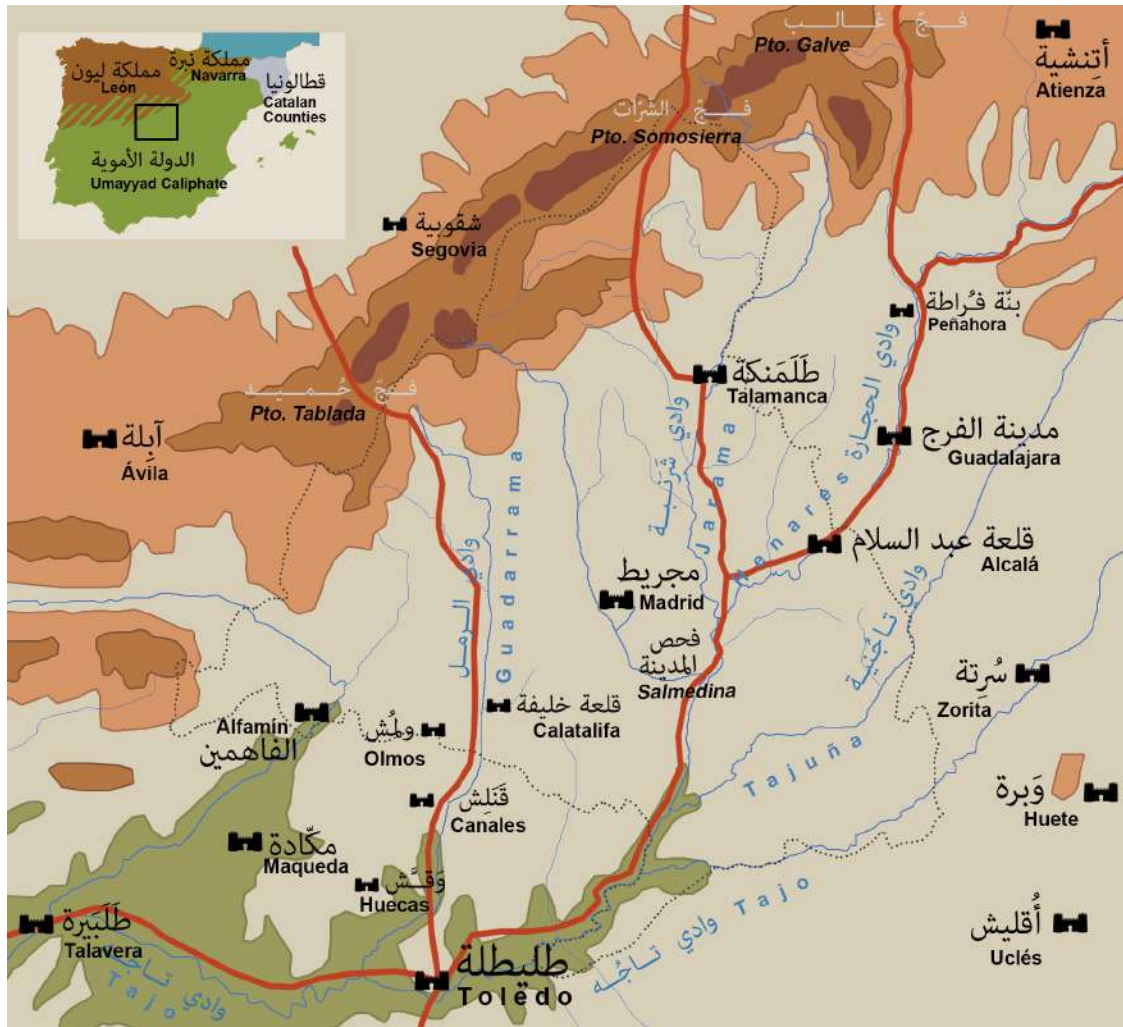


Town Wall of Talamanca de Jarama.
[Photo: Javier Sánchez]

path was *Balat Humayd*, or “Humayd’s road”. All we know about Humayd is that it was a man’s name. Who he was is anyone’s guess. For centuries this road was traversed by expeditions and travellers between al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms and remained in use for a long time afterwards as a road link between the two Mesetas (plateaus). It was used for example by King Ramiro II of León in the year 932 on his journey south to lay waste to Madrid and by the troops of the Caliph in 939 on their march north to attack León, during which they were amazed by an unexpected eclipse. Sancho the Fat of León chose this route in 958, accompanied by his grandmother Queen Toda of Pamplona, on his way to receive treatment for his obesity from the renowned physician, Hasday ibn Shaprut, the Jewish doctor of the Caliph of Cordoba. Alfonso VI used the same path on his way back to León in October 1072 after his exile at the court of King al-Ma’mun of Toledo, and returned ten years later to conquer the kingdom of his erstwhile ally. The *Balat Humayd* was also used when the Court was moved briefly from Madrid to Valladolid in 1601. The path was later forgotten, although the route it followed, invaded in some places by private estates, is still visible and can be followed by those wishing to cross the mountains.



From top to bottom: Andalusian bridges of El Grajal (Colmenar Viejo), La Alcanzorla (Galapagar) and El Pasadero (Navalagamella), the latter before its recent restoration. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]



Map showing what the Madrid region may have looked like in the Caliphate era. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumea]

The region's capital was Toledo, a city in a permanent state of rebellion that was a constant source of headaches for the rulers of al-Andalus in Cordoba. In the year 755, Abd al-Rahman *al-Dakhil* ("the Immigrant"), a survivor of the massacre of the Umayyads of Damascus by their rivals the Abbasids, landed on the coast of what is today the province of Granada and the following year proclaimed himself Emir, so converting al-Andalus into an independent territory. The people of Toledo rose up in support of the deposed Abbasid governor Yusuf al-Fihri, and from then on, the city only accepted the authority of the Emirs of Cordoba unwillingly and on a temporary basis. Toledo's tendency to rebel was so great that under the first Caliph, Abd al-Rahman III, who managed to pacify al-Andalus successfully in the 10th century, the periods of rebellion of Toledo, when added together, were longer than those in which they obeyed their rulers in Cordoba. The incapacity of its enemies to bring Toledo into line was so evident that the chronicler al-Razi felt obliged to excuse this failure by claiming that Julius Caesar himself had been unable to take the city, as its inhabitants had developed the bad habit of being in a perpetual state of revolt. This did not prevent one of the most celebrated Emirs of al-Andalus, Abd al-Rahman II from being born in Toledo.



Watchtower known as El Vellón, in the mountains north of Madrid. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

This Emir was succeeded in the year 852 by his eldest son, Muhammad, the ruler who according to the Chronicles founded Madrid. The reason for founding the city was that right from the outset of his reign, Muhammad I had to withstand a succession of much talked-about rebellions in



Tower from the Castle (Alcazaba) of Alcalá de Henares.
[Photo: Javier Sánchez]

which the people of Toledo received support from the Berber tribes in the Sierras de Almadén and from troops from Asturias with which King Ordoño was hoping to “fish in troubled waters”. It was in this situation that the idea of surrounding Toledo with a series of fortresses with garrisons and governors that were loyal to Cordoba first took shape. These additional defences would help to put down the rebellions, cut off the lines of communication between the rebels and any undesirable allies and protect the roads. This strategy also coincided with the wish of the first Emirs to “civilize” the territory, in other words to create or develop cities which would help to extend the influence and tax-raising capacity of the state and populate the least protected regions.

And that was how Madrid first came into being. As a castle built to protect the “frontier of Toledo” from the external and internal enemies of the Emirs of Cordoba. We do not know the exact date of its foundation but it must have been after the great Toledo rebellion of 858 and before 870 or 871, the year in which according to the Chronicles a rebel who was fleeing north was intercepted by the garrison

of Madrid. Various other castles appeared at that time such as the one in Talamanca in the Jarama river valley, and those of Calatalifa (*Qal'at Khalifa*), Canales (*Qanalish*) and Olmos (*Walmush*) near the *Balat Humayd*, on the banks of the River Guadarrama. There was also the castle of Calatrava (*Qal'at Rabah*) built to protect the route from Cordoba to Toledo, Zorita (*Surita*) on the upper reaches of the River Tajo, near the Visigoth town of Recopolis, or the impressive city of Vascos, near Talavera, which was probably the city of *Nafza* referred to in the Chronicles. Later on, the region would also be filled with watchtowers, such as those that can still be seen today in Torreldones and on the path up to the Somosierra mountain pass, which was then known as *fajj Tariq* or *fajj al-Sherrat*, or the “Pass of Tariq” (named after Tariq ibn Ziyad, the conqueror of al-Andalus) or the “Pass through the Mountains”. Watchtowers were also erected in the mountains of Guadalajara, Soria and many other places. It is said that the etymological origin of the Arabic name for the River Henares, *Wad al-Hijara* or “River of Stones” (which later gave rise to the place name Guadalajara), was due to the large number of fortifications and towers that had been built in the neighbouring area to protect the road to Zaragoza.



Inside of a watchtower similar to those found in the mountains near Madrid and other areas in the Marca Media. [Image: Museo de la Ciudad de Torrejón de Ardoz/Balawat with technical advice from Arqueoestudio and managed by mayo&mas]



Terracotta artefact representing a horseshoe arched gate, flanked by two towers. 11th century. Discovered on the site of the house of St Isidore, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]



The city wall is the oldest construction in Madrid. It is made out of blocks of limestone and flint, laid using the Cordoba bond, i.e. alternating one block or ashlar where the stretcher (or long side) is visible and two or three in which the header (or short side) is visible. It was built in the ninth century and then rebuilt after King Ramiro II of León attacked the city in the year 932. Originally it was almost twice as high as it is today. Unfortunately, the architectural “grandmother” of Madrid has rarely received the care that her venerable old age deserves. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

“On water I was built. My walls are made of fire”

Madrid was founded on a plateau that rises up sharply above the river and is divided into two large hills. One is today the site of the Almudena Cathedral and the Royal Palace and the other of the gardens known as Las Vistillas. The River Manzanares, which was known to the first *madrileños* (inhabitants of Madrid) as *Wad ar-Raml* or “River of Sand” (or, Guadarrama, its name until the 17th century), flowed about 500 m away from this plateau and 60 m below, and was therefore too far away to play a role in the water supply of the new city. This was not necessary however as Madrid had more than enough water of its own: the streams known as Fuentes de San Pedro (under the Calle Segovia), Arenal, Leganitos, Tenerías Norte and Tenerías Sur (in the Almudena area), the spring known as Caños Viejos (in Las Vistillas) or the lake known as La Laguna de Luján (today the site of the Plaza Mayor) explain the first part of the old motto of Madrid: “On water I was built”.

The second part, “my walls are made of fire”, refers to the flint that was used in the construction of the city walls. The castle of Madrid to which al-Razi referred was a fortified area covering about 4 hectares, which the first *madrileños* called *al-mudayna*, or “the citadel”, and occupied the space bounded today by the ravine formed by the River Manzanares to the west, the Calle del Factor to the East, the Royal Palace to the North and the sharp downslope on the Calle Segovia to the south. In other words, the area around the Almudena Cathedral, which got its name from the Andalusian name for Madrid *al-mudayna*. It was a relatively small fortress (*alcazaba*) that was similar in size to the castles of Calatrava, Calatalifa and Zorita, and far smaller than the hundred-hectare precinct within the city walls of Toledo. However, the people of Madrid did not all live within the city walls as we will soon go on to see.

The wall of *Majrit* was about 760 metres long and was reinforced by large square towers. It was about 12 to 15 metres high (plus 2 metres of foundations) and consisted of two faces made of limestone masonry and flint with a lime and river stone filling, in other words a mixture of stone and mortar. In this way, they built strong walls that were between 2.3 and 3.3 metres thick and were rendered on the inside with lime. Part of these walls still stand today, which is something of a miracle given that ever since Philip II decided to move his Court to Madrid, the aim of most local dignitaries has been to get rid of anything that might stand in the way of speculative building development. According to Jerónimo de Quintana in 1629, “the wall was incredibly strong of lime and stones, and of mortar, standing high and thick, about twelve feet wide, with large towers, bastions, barbicans and ditches”.⁴ This chronicler also describes the Puerta de la Vega, one of three gates into the Andalusian fortress and the last to disappear:

It was rather narrow, and situated beneath a strong knightly tower; it had two rooms, and in the space inside it there were very narrow staircases on both sides, one on each, which led right up to the top. In the one on the outside there was a hole in the centre of the Arch, where a heavy iron weight was hidden, which in war time was dropped with enormous force using a catapult or wheel, reducing all those beneath it to a thousand small pieces.⁵

The Puerta de la Vega was situated at what is today the end of Calle Mayor, near the wall niche containing an image of the Virgin Mary. The Calle Mayor is itself a legacy of al-Andalus. It linked the Vega with the east gate into the city, which was situated at what is today the head office of the



Remains of Majrit as seen on the map by Teixeira (1656): the wall, the Puerta de La Vega and the Church of Santa María de la Almudena, formerly the Great Mosque, pointing towards Mecca. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]

Council of State (Consejo de Estado). In more modern times, this gate was known as the Arch of La Almudena and was demolished in 1570 because it was considered too narrow and might obstruct the passage of the bridal cortege of Ana of Austria, the fourth wife of Philip II. The decision to move the court to Madrid was accompanied by a project to turn what was at that stage a “Villa” (a medium-sized town in mediaeval Castile) into a city fit to rival Rome herself, even if that meant reinventing everything from scratch. To this end, they deliberately destroyed almost all the Andalusian constructions that might have survived until then, which were uncomfortable because they were Islamic and also because they were austere, given that, as is important to remember, they belonged to a city that was originally conceived for defensive purposes. The humanist, Juan López de Hoyos, who in other aspects was a keen conveyer of court propaganda, regretted the disappearance of the old towers and walls: “I cannot help feeling sorry about them being knocked down every day”,⁶ he wrote.

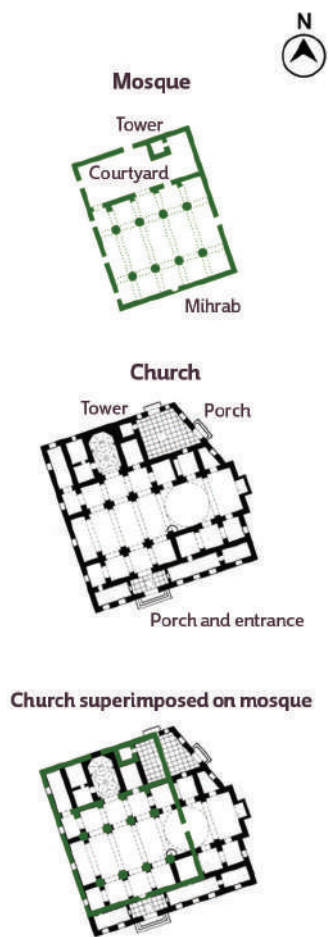
All visible remains of al-Andalus finally disappeared as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth. 1869 saw the demolition of the Church of Santa María, a former mosque that had been situated near the Arch of La Almudena, because its orientation towards Mecca made the Calle Mayor too narrow. Soon afterwards, the enormous ditch dug to lay the foundations of the new cathedral almost certainly destroyed a large section of the wall and of the foundations of the old *medina*. In 1874, the building works on the first of the viaducts may well have removed the last remains of the old Narigües tower, which overlooked the path out to the Vega and the suburb outside the city walls on the other side of the ravine, which according to Jerónimo de Quintana had its own governor and garrison. As late as 1913, a report in the *ABC* newspaper celebrated the destruction of a section of the wall, next to the Calle Bailén: “If we are to advance in line with the progressive current of the new civilization, the pick must be wielded to good use”.⁷

However, not everything that had disappeared had in fact been destroyed. In November 1953, building works revealed a 120-metre section of wall that was thought to have been lost and had been hidden amongst the enormous gardens of two old noble houses. Of course, the workmen went to great lengths to destroy it “with slow, arduous drilling work”,⁸ according to the arabist Jaime Oliver Asín and the archaeologist Leopoldo Torres Balbás, who managed to halt the building work *in extremis*. The section of wall visible today in the park named after Emir Muhammad I is

a fruit of this effort and of the excavation and restoration work conducted in subsequent decades, although the legal protection of these remains could not prevent a piece of wall and a tower from being demolished some years later to make way for the construction of luxury apartments in Calle Bailén 12. The basement of this building, in which the remains of the cut-off wall are still visible, is a monument to the complicated relationship between property speculation and historic heritage. Years later, the excavation work conducted prior to the construction of the Museum housing the Royal Collections (Museo de Colecciones Reales) between 2007 and 2013 uncovered a hundred metres of wall with four towers, two of which were well conserved, while the others were camouflaged beneath post-16th century constructions. They also discovered a sentry path and various houses and streets and a small gate that opened onto the Campo del Moro. The large heavy gates to the city also had these small gates to make it easier for people to go in and out (the one near the Puerta de la Vega is still visible). This small gate may have been the third gate into the *medina*, known as “la Puerta de la Sagra”, whose exact location is unknown.



The Cathedral of La Almudena rising up above the remains of the walls of Majrit. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]



Hypothetical reconstruction of the floorplan of the Mosque of Madrid on top of that of the Church of Santa María de la Almudena taken from the book *La forma de la Villa de Madrid* by J. Ortega Vidal and F.J. Marín Perellón (directors), 2004. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeaya]

And what was the citadel like on the inside? The city was structured around the great mosque. It was not just a place for prayer in that as well as being a place for the faithful to congregate, it was also a school and a meeting place for scholars, a place where the authorities could voice their message and the place where the *qadi* (governor or judge) held his audiences. Its position next to one of the gates (la Puerta de la Almudena), which gave on to the outlying districts to the west meant that it was easy for those living outside the walls to attend, especially when the whole community came together for the Friday prayers and sermon, in which the governor took part. The site of the mosque largely coincided with what is today the block of streets containing Calle Mayor number 88, Calle Bailén 19-21 and numbers 1-3 of the small Calle de la Almudena, where a fragment of the apse of the church can still be seen. The floor-plan of the Christian church gives us some idea of what the mosque must have been like, with five naves running perpendicular to the wall of the Qibla (the one facing towards Mecca), with its characteristic *mihrab* or decorated niche, in which in Christian times they opened the main door into the church. At the opposite north-western end, there was a courtyard with a minaret, which was later converted into a bell-tower. The minaret



Reconstruction of Andalusian Madrid on a map by W.B. Clarke from 1831. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]



The decorative feature on the roof of the Monastery of Las Descalzas is a *jamur* (original or imitation): the three metal balls that crowned the minarets of the mosques were later reused all over the Iberian Peninsula as a base for crosses and weather vanes. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeña]

would have been a square tower with a slightly inset upper section, as was typical of mosques in the Islamic west. It would have been topped with a *jamur*, a very common decoration made up of a rod with three metal spheres that decreased in size from the bottom up. These decorations were later reused (and sometimes imitated) in churches. The church of Santa María de la Almudena also had a *jamur*, with a cross on the top. A similar decoration can be seen today on top of the Monastery of las Descalzas Reales, but we do not know if it was originally from a mosque or is an imitation.

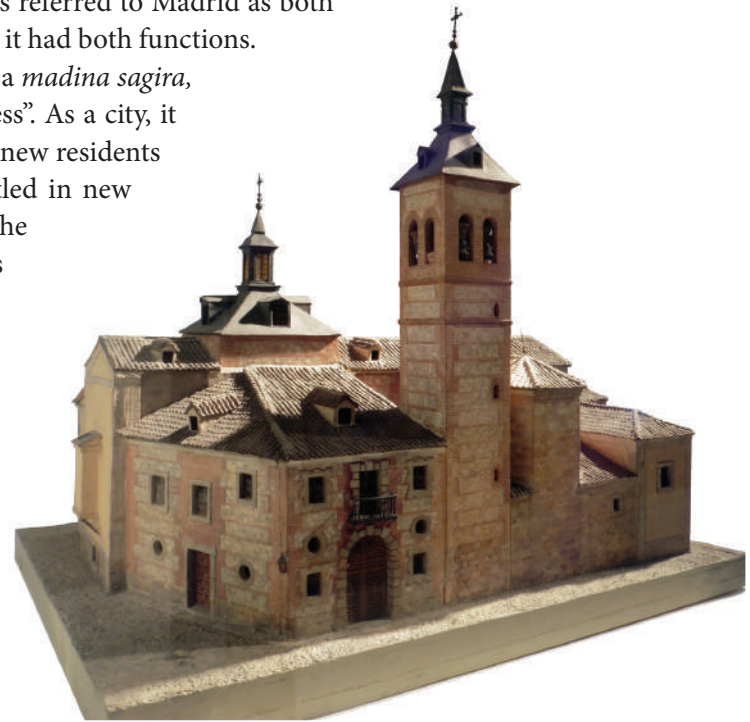
Next to the mosque, there was once a small square (*rahba*) and some shops, probably selling spices, perfume and jewellery. Madrid would have had the closely interwoven, complex street pattern typical of traditional Islamic cities. Branching off the main streets, there were narrow side streets (*darb*), the characteristic alleyways of the Islamic Medina which penetrated deep into the blocks of

houses and were the product of a conception of public and private that was completely divorced from that prevailing in Christian society. These alleyways created small communities of residents, whose doors were carefully laid out to prevent them from facing each other directly, so protecting their privacy, a custom that would later be maintained in some of the municipal ordinances of Toledo: “No doors of your house must be made facing the door of your neighbour”.⁹ The houses uncovered beneath the Museum of the Royal Collections, dated from between the end of the

Islamic period and the beginning of the Christian era and are typically Andalusian. They have a floor area of between 80 and 90 m² and are structured around a courtyard, which provides both light and water (from a well) and gives on to the other rooms. The entrance to the house had a small elbow-shaped hallway, which was separated from the courtyard by a low wall that protected those inside from prying glances. These houses may also have had an upper floor with one or two more rooms, but these have not survived. An inscription above the door on one of the houses reads: *al-mulk li-llah* (“Sovereignty is God’s”).

Madrid was not confined within its walls and extended into other spaces outside the citadel. In fact, most of the material remains from this period —discovered in silos, ancient cereal stores later reused for other purposes— were found outside the walls in outlying suburbs known as *arrabales*. Arabic sources referred to Madrid as both a *hisn* (castle) and a *madina* (city), which meant that it had both functions. It was described by the geographer al-Idrisi, as both a *madina sagira*, “a small city”, and a *qal’a mani’a* “a powerful fortress”. As a city, it was the capital of a small region that soon attracted new residents from the surrounding villages, many of whom settled in new districts laid out around the walled city. In fact, the so-called “Christian wall” of Madrid, which was built after the conquest of the city by Alfonso VI, encompasses to a large extent the outlying districts that the Castilians encountered on their arrival, which gives some idea of the size of *Majrit* in its last stages.

Parish of Santa María de la Almudena, built on the site of the old Great Mosque of Madrid. The scale model by José Monasterio Riesco (1945-1950), shows the church as it was before it was demolished in 1868. Museo de San Isidro. [Photo: MSI]



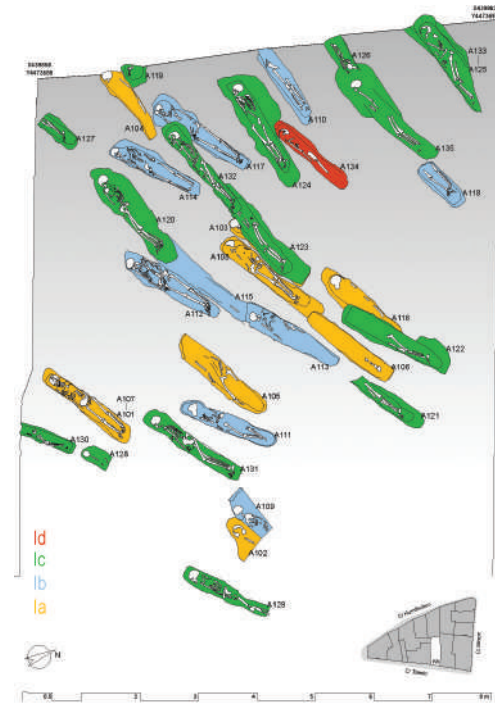


Qanat in the Plaza de los Carros in a very deteriorated state after being abandoned for many years after its discovery in the 1980s. [Photo: Luis Olano]

The oldest and most populated of these outlying districts was to the south in the Las Vistillas area. It is possible even that it was originally settled prior to the construction of the walls as its position is not obviously associated with any of the gates or paths leading out of the citadel. This district extended into another one further east which reached the area known today as Plaza de la Cebada, in which various important archaeological finds have been made. Firstly, in the Plaza de los Carros, there are various water channels or *qanawat*, the Andalusian predecessors of the famous “*viajes de agua*” or underground aqueducts that supplied Madrid with water up until the creation of the Canal de Isabel II. Although this water supply network dates above all from the Early Modern Era, because it is directly associated

with the establishment of the Royal Court and the rapid increase in population, the supply system—as with many other water-related inventions—was imported by the Andalusians from the Orient. Water is taken from sub-surface aquifers (accumulations of rainwater and snow that have filtered down through the ground until they reach an impermeable layer of rock) and channelled through a long tunnel to the place you want to supply. This technique can be found in places as far apart as eastern Turkey, the Iranian plateau, the Yemen, the Sahara oases, where they are still used today, and the city of Marrakesh. And, of course, Madrid. There is a *qanat* in the Plaza de los Carros, which was excavated and studied in the 1980s before being covered up from public view, as has happened to many other archaeological remains. Alongside it, there is a curious artificial cave (perhaps once a cellar or a basement of an Andalusian house), which is also hidden away. In a nearby chapel (Capilla del Obispo) there are remains of another *qanat*, which was discovered by chance and later covered up.

This area also contains the cemetery, which according to Islamic custom was always outside the city walls (at that time the Christians buried their dead inside the cities, next to the churches, which is why many of them still have a small garden). The location of the Islamic cemetery was known to 16th century sources because the initial site of the Hospital de la Latina, after which the district was known and which was north of the Plaza de la Cebada, was later extended into the cemetery grounds. It is also known that the Calle Sierpe was built traversing what was at that time known as the “Moors’ ossuary”. In the 20th century various urban legends told of skeletons that appeared every time building work was conducted in that area. Finally, in 2006 some excavations in a building site at Calle Toledo n° 68 laid bare part of a necropolis, with 43 tombs dating from the 9th to the 15th centuries. More recently in 2019, two Muslim tombs from the 13th century were discovered in the restoration of the Palace of the Duchess of Sueca (Palacio de la Duquesa de Sueca) situated between the Plaza de la Cebada and the Calle Tirso de Molina. It must therefore have been a very large cemetery, which was used since the foundation of the city until the conversion of the Muslims to Christianity, making it the oldest cemetery in the city. It was also the most long-lived, not just because of its seven centuries of apparent use, but also due to the fact that in some way at least it still survives, with its inhabitants buried facing south-east towards Mecca as required by Islamic law.



Plan of the excavations of the Islamic cemetery in Calle Toledo n° 68. The different colours highlight the different times in its history. 1a and 1b refer to Andalusian Madrid and 1c and 1d to the Muslim minority in Christian Madrid [Image: José Ignacio Murillo Fragero]

Their tombstones were almost certainly reused in other constructions. Only one has survived. It belonged to an important person called Darir, son of Ibrahim. The tombstone says that he “died, may God have mercy on him, on Saturday 20th of Ramadan of the year 308 [2nd February 921]. May God refresh his tomb”.¹⁰



Remains of an Andalusian watchtower in the car-park in the Plaza de Oriente. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

This area may have been the site of the *musalla*, an open-air prayer space that was normally situated near the cemetery and was a place where large numbers of the faithful could gather on special occasions, in particular the Feast of the Sacrifice and the Feast held to mark the end of Ramadan, in a way that was both festive and religious. At the time of the Castilian conquest of Madrid, a legal scholar from Tortosa complained about the secular use of the *musallas* stating that on the holidays men and women would go to the *musalla* together where they would set up “pavilions for amusing themselves rather than for praying”.¹¹ This space was also used in the ceremonies for *istisqa*, prayers beseeching rain, such as those which the Caliph ordered should be said in all the *musallas* in al-Andalus, during the intensely dry spring of 930. Quite nearby is the Plaza de la Paja where a market was held for centuries. In a document dated 1203 this market is referred to as a “zoch”, or *suq* (souk) the Arabic word for market, which means that it was probably of Andalusian origin. This would have been

the souk selling everyday objects, animals and farm produce, given that the luxury items (perfumes, fabrics, jewellery ...) were usually sold in a specific market situated next to the great Mosque and therefore inside the citadel.

There were two other suburbs next to the citadel. The one closest to the walls developed to the east of the Gate of the Almudena, along the road to Alcalá. In the minutes of a meeting of the Concejo (City Council) of 1548, this area is apparently referred to as the Axerquía, a name of Andalusian origin derived from *al-sharqiyya* or “eastern area”. It was a fundamentally agricultural area, as is shown by the large number of wells discovered there and the remains of other agricultural objects, such as seeds and the buckets that were used in *norias* or waterwheels to lift water up from a river to a slightly higher aqueduct. The stream known as Arroyo del Arenal flowed through here, before going on to join the Arroyo de Leganitos, which later cascaded down the steep sides of the Cuesta de San Vicente. In etymological terms *Leganitos* may be related to the Arabic *al-jannat*, which means “gardens” or “vegetable gardens”. In the underground car park beneath the Plaza de Oriente, there are remains of a watchtower, which was probably used to protect the cultivated areas and the water courses.



Bucket from a *noria* waterwheel. 9th-13th centuries. Discovered on the site of the house of St Isidore, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

Remains of wall have been found in these eastern outlying districts which suggests that there may have been a second fortified precinct, which archaeologists refer to as *la medinilla* or “small medina”, perhaps a later extension of the citadel. It is important to bear in mind that Andalusian Madrid existed for two and a half centuries and gradually evolved over time. The streets known today as Calle de los Señores de Luzón, Calle del Rollo and Calle de la Villa may originally have been the sentry paths running around the outside of the walls of the *medinilla*, which also went through the Plaza de la Villa and the Plaza de la Cruz Verde. If this idea of a second walled precinct is true, the sections of wall that can be seen today inside two bars in this area situated respectively at Calle del Rollo nº 8 and Calle Segovia nº 16 would have belonged to it.

Apart from these walled precincts and outlying districts there may also have been a *qasr* or palace, which would have been the residence of the Governor of Madrid and his garrison. This seat of power could perhaps have been the remote origin of today’s Palacio Real (Royal Palace), itself a successor to the Real Alcázar of the Hapsburg Dynasty of Spanish Kings (known in Spanish as “Los Austrias”). If this is true, the former Church of San Miguel de la Sagra (demolished in 1549) may have been the palace mosque. The empty space between the palace and the citadel may have been an *albacar* (walled enclosure), an occasional place of shelter for the inhabitants of the surrounding areas and their animals. *Al-baqar* in Arabic means “the cows”. In building works in the Plaza de Oriente in the 1990s the foundations of a wall were uncovered (and then destroyed), which were interpreted as the remains of the famous *albacar*.

Another unusual space that once existed in Madrid and is reported in Christian sources although its name is Arabic was the *almuzara*. It appears in the *Fuero* (a set of local statutes) of 1202, which punished with a fine of four maravedis all those who carried weapons with a sharpened tip in the “*almuzara*, the suburbs, the city, the market or the Council”. So, what was the *almuzara*? The name comes from the word *al-musara*, which in some cities in al-Andalus and the Maghreb was used to refer to a space outside the walls, normally next to a river, which was used just as easily for taking a stroll or a ride on a horse as for tournaments and military parades or for billeting troops that were passing through. In Madrid, it is thought that the *almuzara* may have been in the large open space at the foot of the city which is today the Campo del Moro and the Parque de Atenas. In the Austrias era, the latter was an esplanade known as La Tela, which was used for jousting and tournaments, so continuing with the original function of the *almuzara*.



“The castle of Madrid” drawn by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen in 1534. The Church of San Miguel de la Sagra appears in front of the Palace, between the two towers, and the wall of the *albacar* or enclosure can be seen on the left. [Metropolitan Museum, New York]

Madrid before Madrid

And what was here before *Majrit* was founded? Scattered Roman and pre-Roman remains have been found in the broad expanse covered by the city today, which has absorbed what were once separate towns on the periphery such as los Carabancheles, Villaverde or Vallecas, and in the Casa de Campo. However, as regards the historic site of the city itself, there is no evidence of any town or settlement that predated its foundation during al-Andalus. This may seem surprising to many. Most *madrileños* will have read about a Visigoth village that later became the Mozarab district of

Islamic Madrid, and many more will have heard tell of the Greeks and the Carpetani tribes who founded the city way back in deepest darkest Antiquity. There is also the fact that on the day of Madrid's patron saint, (the Virgin of La Almudena) on 9th November, they celebrate the rediscovery of the sacred image of the Virgin, which had allegedly been hidden away within the walls of the city before it fell to the *Moors* in the year 712.

Well no. The only reference to Madrid in non-Arabic sources prior to the conquest of the city by Alfonso VI in 1085 was written in Latin by the chronicler Sampiro, the Bishop of Astorga, at the beginning of the 11th century. In this story he narrates the attack by Ramiro II on the frontier in the year 932, stating that:

Once Ramiro was secure in his reign, he consulted the great men of his kingdom as to the best way to invade the land of the Chaldeans, and bringing his army together, he headed for the city known as *Magerit*, took down its walls, wreaking great havoc on a Sunday, and aided by the clemency of God, returned to his kingdom in peace with his victory.¹²

Magerit is the first Latin transcription of the Arabic name *Majrit*. By the way he refers to it (offering no additional information), it would seem that Bishop Sampiro had never heard of *Magerit*. This seems surprising for a place that had allegedly also been an important town in the Visigoth or previous eras. The reason *Magerit* was unfamiliar to him was that all the stories about the Carpetani, classical and Visigoth past of Madrid first appeared during the times of Philip II when the "Villa" became



Fragment from a jug with an epigraphic motif, 10th-11th centuries. Found in the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

the Court. The capital of what was at that time the most powerful Empire in the world deserved a history that was at least as grandiose as that of Lisbon, Paris and Rome even, something that Madrid obviously lacked. However, this lack of any important relics of the past made it easier for this “history” to be invented. In the 16th century, Spain had entered the Early Modern era and was doing everything it could to cast off its Islamic and Jewish past, which was out of step with the role that the Austrias had assigned themselves as the defenders *par excellence* of the Catholic faith against the Protestant Reformation and Islam. The enemies of the Empire, and in particular the Protestant nations, attacked Spain by calling into question its Christian essence and insistently pointing out the *Moorish* and *mestizo* or mixed-race (not to say bastardized) features of the Spaniards and all things Spanish, to the point of referring to the Emperor as the “Sultan”. All of this was deeply troubling for the Spanish monarchy, which tried to spread counterpropaganda to demonstrate how well anchored it was in the Greco-Roman and Germanic substrate of Europe, and intensified its hostility towards Islam.

Madrid, with its symbolic status as the seat of the royal court despite its humble origins, had to have a place in all this, and a whole pseudointellectual set of works appeared that could trace back its origins to the most splendid period of Antiquity. Court figures such as Juan López de Hoyos and in the following century, Jerónimo de Quintana and Juan de Vera Tassis y Villarroel were responsible for giving flesh and form to the legends that linked Madrid with the ancient city of Mantua referred to in the *Geography* by Claudius Ptolemy in the 2nd century AD (in fact Mantua was the small town of Villamanta, situated southwest of Madrid). They also created a heroic founder called Ocno Bianor. Quintana stated that Madrid had been founded “by the years of the Creation of the world of four thousand three hundred and twenty, and two thousand and seventy-eight years after the Great Flood, one hundred before the first Olympiad, and 879 before the birth of Christ our Lord”,¹³ in other words that Madrid was 125 years older than Rome itself. Juan de Vera Tassis said that the image of Santa María de la Almudena had been taken to Madrid by the Apostle St James the Elder (known in Spanish as Santiago), and that her church, constructed on top of an ancient temple dedicated to Jupiter or Serapis, was the first church in honour of the Virgin Mary in the Iberian Peninsula and one of the earliest in the whole world. One big question that these legends were unable to explain was of course why the patroness of Madrid had an Arabic name.

In the nineteenth century, all these fantasies were discarded due to their complete lack of any historical grounding. At the beginning of the century Juan Antonio Pellicer and at the end the great chronicler of Madrid Ramón de Mesonero Romanos made clear that all the evidence pointed towards an Islamic foundation of the Villa. However, as we know, the Andalusian legacy is often perceived as problematic and even today Madrid as the capital city seems to condense Spanish national identity in a similar way as it once represented the identity of the Empire of the Habsburgs. For this reason over the course of the 20th century various other researchers tried to uncover alternative origins for Madrid. Rather than casting the net back to the glory days of Classical Antiquity, they decided to focus on possible Celtic or Gothic founders with long blonde beards who were more in keeping with the Aryan tastes in vogue at that time. We should remember here that various generations of Spanish children began their school education by learning a list of the 33 Gothic Kings off by heart “Ataúlfo, Sigerico, Walia...”, all of whom by the way have a street named after them in Madrid. We would challenge any readers that may still have doubts about the memory of al-Andalus being an issue for the powers-that-be to find out how many references to famous personages from al-Andalus can be found amongst Madrid street names.



Bowl with button handles in partial *cuerda seca* (dry cord) glaze, 10th century. Found in the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid.
[Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

The arabist, Jaime Oliver Asín, who rediscovered the wall and was a pioneer in the study of Islamic Madrid, proposed the idea that Madrid was in origin a Visigoth village, which survived during the Andalusian era as a Mozarab Christian district of the Muslim city. Oliver's approach owed a great deal to the nationalistic orientation that dominated Spanish arabism at the time and which tried to ensure that al-Andalus was accepted as an inherent part or period within Spanish culture by trying to find some prior "indigenous" origin or background, be it Visigoth, Roman or whatever. A widely-held premise at that time was that the Mozarabs had maintained the essence of Spanish culture (the Romance language and the Christian religion) through the long centuries of "Islamic domination". One rung below them in the national sympathies were the Muladies, "Spaniards" who had converted to Islam and were therefore to some extent traitors to the nation. Despite this, the arabists tried to rehabilitate them to in an attempt to prove that they had formed the majority of the population of al-Andalus, which meant that Andalusian civilization could then be claimed as something intrinsically Spanish. Today however these very restrictive labels, which have more to do with contemporary ideological parameters than with history itself, are of limited scientific value, especially as we now know that Andalusian society was more of a melting pot than a juxtaposition of separate, closed groups.



Cooking pot with four handles. 9th-10th centuries. Found in the Calle Noblejas nº 5, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

The fact is that if, as claimed, Madrid had a Mozarabic neighbourhood, this would imply that this neighbourhood had existed prior to the foundation of the Islamic city, so preserving the “Spanishness” of the capital during the al-Andalus era. However, Oliver himself retracted this claim some time later and publicly stated that there were no solid foundations on which to base the idea of the Visigoth village: “Given the name *Madrid*, it would be wrong to speculate on possible Iberian, Celtic, Roman or Visigoth origins. Madrid, as a populated entity, is not pre-Muslim”,¹⁴ he wrote. Nonetheless, the idea of a Madrid founded by Muslims is still hard to digest for those who believe in the “clash

of civilizations”, which is why, periodically, we come across sensationalist publications that make unfounded claims about the city’s Carpetani, Roman or Visigoth origins.

In fact, the Arabic sources do not rule out the possibility of an earlier village. When al-Razi stated that the Emir Muhammad *built* the castle of Madrid, he did not say that he created a newly laid-out town, just that it was fortified. The Andalusians constructed new cities but also made use of existing towns, including some that had been abandoned. The fact is, however, that neither archaeological excavations nor documentary sources offer any evidence as to the existence of a village or even a more basic settlement in Madrid prior to the 9th century. In fact, in the Madrid region as a whole there are relatively few Visigoth remains compared to those left behind by its Roman and pre-Roman inhabitants, which would seem to indicate that the area was unpopulated for various centuries prior to the arrival of Muslims.



11th century dish glazed with the *cuerda seca* technique introduced by the Andalusians. Found in the Calle Mancebos n° 3, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/ Mario Torquemada]

The name “Madrid”

It is now time to talk about the meaning of the word *Madrid*. The truth is that we don't really know. The name of our city comes from *Majrit* through Mediaeval Castilian *Magerit* and successive variants in between. We believe that the name is of Arabic origin because it first appeared in Arabic texts, but the fact is that it has no obvious meaning in Arabic. *Majrit* is the standardized written adaptation of the name used by the first settlers, whose oral form and origin is unknown. The widespread interest in the origins of Madrid has given rise to a vast range of hypotheses about the name, which vary from fairly reasonable to the stuff of fantasy. At present, the most generally accepted version is that it is a hybrid between the Arabic word *majra* (watercourse) and the Romance suffix for abundance *-it*. According to this theory, *Majrit* is therefore a place with an abundance of *majras* or watercourses, hence the expression “on water I was built”. Alternatively, it could be a phonetic Arabization of the Romance word *matrice*, pronounced *matrich* and meaning “womb” or “source of life”, perhaps in reference to the stream known as Fuentes de San Pedro, although the latter is pure conjecture.



Pot with recess, 10th century. Found in the Plaza de la Morería on the corner with Calle Granado, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]



Beak-shaped oil lamp. 10th-11th centuries. Found in the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

The two hypotheses have sometimes been dubbed as either “Arabic” or “Christian”, respectively as if they provided “proof” either that Madrid was purely the product of the construction ordered by the Emir or, alternatively, that it developed around an earlier Visigoth village. In reality, neither of these options proves anything. It is important to remember that *Majrit* was founded 150 years after the disappearance of the Visigoth kingdom, which means that a hypothetical pre-existing village could not in any case be described as Visigoth without the writer being accused of anachronism. The inhabitants of al-Andalus, including those descended from the Visigoth elite, were by then immersed in an advanced process of human and cultural intermingling. During the period in which Madrid was founded, the theologian Álvaro de Córdoba complained that the young Christians in his city would compete with each other to show off their literary mastery of the Arabic language, while less than one in a thousand was capable of writing a letter in Latin. This perhaps explains why the Christians of al-Andalus were known in the kingdoms in the north of the peninsula as Mozarabs, which means “arabized” (*musta’rab*). One of the fruits of this cultural and human interbreeding was generalized Arabic-Romance bilingualism, to which one would have to add the contribution made by the vernacular Berber languages, about which little is known. This means that a place name with an Arabic, Romance, Berber or hybrid root could equally easily have appeared in the Madrid Region in the 9th century whatever the origin or the religion of the people who founded the town.



Fragment from large earthenware jar with the inscription *al-yumn* (happiness). 11th century. Found in Aranjuez. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

The Giant and the Qadi. The first madrileños

In the 14th century, by which time Madrid was under Christian control, the geographer al-Himyari compiled various snippets of information about life in Madrid offered by earlier writers:

Madrid: a notable town of al-Andalus, which was built by the Emir Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman. There are 31 miles from Madrid to the bridge of *Maqida*, which is the last territory of Islam. In Madrid, there is a clay from which they make pots, which can be used on the fire for 20 years without breaking and without the things that are cooked inside them being hardly affected by the heat or by the cold. The Castle of Madrid is an important castle and is amongst the constructions built by the Emir Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman. In his *History* Ibn Hayyan mentions the ditch that was dug out around the outside of the city walls of Madrid and states: “In it they found a grave with a gigantic skeleton, which was 51 cubits long, that is 102 palms, from the cushion for his head to the end of his feet. The truth of this was confirmed by an announcement issued by the Qadi of Madrid, who went in person to see it, together with official witnesses and certified that the volume of his skull reached eight *arrobas* [about 95 litres]. Praised be He who has put His sign in all things!”. Madrid is a small city and a powerful fortress. In times of Islam it had a great mosque where the sermon was regularly preached. It is near Toledo.¹⁵

Various characters are mentioned in this piece while others are perhaps insinuated. Let's start with the giant. What other city could boast of hosting the tomb of one of these fabled creatures? This unusual tale has been interpreted in two ways: either as a purely rhetorical device to add a little colour or drama to the chronicle or —as Jaime Oliver Asín argued— the people of *Majrit* really did discover an unusually large skeleton, which, as happened with many other extinct species found in Madrid, they were unable to relate to any existing animal and therefore attributed to a creature of fable. It is also interesting that the Qadi visited the site with his secretaries to place this surprising event on record. The Qadi or judge was an official post, appointed by the central government, as were the governor (*amil*) and the preacher (*khatib*), the man responsible for giving the sermon. The great mosque (in Arabic *masjid jami'*) to which al-Himyari refers was a mosque with a *minbar* or

raised seat, from which the sermon was delivered on Fridays, attracting for this occasion people from the surrounding towns or villages, who would otherwise attend their local mosques in their village or neighbourhood.

The fact that Madrid had a Qadi, a governor and a preacher shows that it was not just a small hamlet or military base, and instead was the capital of a small region, as is indicated by its status as a *madina* or city. How far did this region extend? According to al-Idrisi, the nearest town with a great mosque or *masjid jami'* was *al-Fahmin* (Alamín), a town that no longer exists which overlooked the River Alberche near Santa Cruz del Retamar. At the confluence of the Manzanares and Jarama rivers there are two Arabic place-names that refer to Madrid, which suggests that this area also belonged to the Madrid region. These are Vaciamadrid, a name derived from *Fahs Majrit* (countryside or pastures of Madrid), and Salmedina, which came from *Fahs al-Madina* (countryside of the city). The Parque Lineal del Manzanares and the Parque Regional del Sudeste could be the remains of what was once the immense *fahs* or communal pastures of Madrid. The name of the present-day district of Moratalaz comes from the hybrid *Morat al-Fahs* (Morat of the Field), in which *morat* was an Arabization of the Romance word *murat(a)*, meaning “walled”. The place-names Morata de Tajuña or Muratiel near Valdetorres del Jarama have the same etymology. Further to the south-east was the hamlet of *Amrús* (Ambroz, formerly a neighbourhood in the centre of Vicálvaro) and the hill known as *al-Mudawwar* (“the Round”) or Almodóvar, which from its summit at 726 metres allowed them to watch over their grazing land as far as the eye could see to such distant places as Guadarrama and Somosierra.

We therefore have some *madrileños* who grew vegetables, reared animals and made clay pots that were of sufficient quality to attract the attention of chroniclers from the court in Cordoba. Most of these first *madrileños* remain anonymous, as the written sources only mention the social elite, the governors, intellectuals and those who rebelled against them. Fortunately, we have quite a number of records of these more illustrious *madrileños*, whom we will later go on to look at. We will begin however by trying to imagine what life must have been like for the common people. Given the lack of written sources, most of the evidence we have comes from what could briefly be described as rubbish. About 270 silos have been discovered in Madrid. Once their original function as cereal-stores had been lost, they were used as rubbish dumps for a whole range of materials, such as ash,

coal, bones, seeds, pollen, wood, ceramics, metal objects, building materials and even egg shells. These remains provide a lot of interesting evidence about the people, their diet, the tools they used and other aspects of their day-to-day lives.

The ceramics found in the silos indicate that for cooking the *madrileños* used an *anafre*, a portable ceramic oven that is mentioned in a well-known Spanish carol and is still widely used today in countries like Morocco. The *madrileños* used clay pots with lids which sometimes could be fixed in place so as to create a primitive kind of pressure cooker. Food and drinks were stored in earthenware jars of varying sizes. There was also dinnerware on which the meals were presented at the table: large *ataifor* dishes or trays and the smaller rounded dishes known as *jofainas*, as well as cups, jugs, bottles and carafes for holding liquids. Clay was also used to make oil lamps, weights for spinning wool, toys and decorative items.

And what did they eat? The diet of the people of al-Andalus is quite well-known as are many of their recipes. The staple ingredient was flour from various different cereals, which was used to make bread that was kneaded at home and then baked in the neighbourhood



Cup with recess, 9th century. Found in the Plaza de la Morería on the corner with Calle Granado, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]



11th century *ataifor* dish in green and manganese with the inscription *al-mulk* (sovereignty). Found in the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

oven. Bread was used to make *migas* and soups and the flour was also used to make pasta. In fact, the words *fideo* and its synonym *aletría*, very small kinds of noodle pasta which are added to soup, are of Andalusian origin. The different grains could also be eaten whole, with meat and vegetable dishes, which were cooked in a similar way to many modern-day stews. The most popular cereal in al-Andalus was wheat, but the fields of Madrid also produced barley, which was cheaper and coarser and was used to make the popular beverage, barley water, whose praises were sung by the philosopher Ibn Rushd (or Averroes), who wrote that it “refreshes, moistens, balances, cleans, aids digestion, does not cause swelling and goes down quickly”.¹⁶ Barley water was very popular amongst the general population of eighteenth century Madrid, although today has almost disappeared. A good indication of the continued importance of barley cultivation is that one of the most famous squares in the city became known as the Plaza de la Cebada (Barley Square) in the 16th century.

There must also have been a wide selection of fruit trees, as records tell of apple, cherry, fig, plum, walnut and hazelnut trees and vines, and the vegetable gardens produced garlic, cabbages and broad beans. The most widely consumed fruits in al-Andalus were figs and grapes, either freshly-picked or dried. It is possible that the grapes were also used to make wine, a drink that was



11th century *ataifor* dish in green and manganese. Found in the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

relatively common in spite of being prohibited by Islam. There were also a small number of olive and mulberry trees. The Sierra de Guadarrama was one of the most famous places in al-Andalus for breeding lambs and oxen. Both of these animals played an important role in the diet of the *madrileños*, as did goats, although the most popular meats were rabbit, hen and partridge.

The above extract from al-Himyari reminds us again that Madrid was a frontier town, in this way hinting at the presence of others beyond the frontier. These were the people of Asturias, Castile and León, who when Madrid was first founded were quite far away on the other side of Duero, but who as the centuries went by and the power of al-Andalus began to weaken, pushed the frontier south to the sierra. The *Maqida* bridge, which at one point was the last territory controlled by Islam, might be the so-called “Roman Bridge” that spans the River Cofio on the outskirts of Valdemaqueda. The distance from the bridge to the centre of Madrid is about 52 kilometres, which is more or less the same as the 31 miles mentioned by the chronicler.

Famous sons of Majrit

The best known and most highly renowned person from Islamic Madrid was Maslama al-Majriti, or Maslama “the Madrileño”, as he was known in Cordoba, which was where he spent most of his life. A mathematician, astronomer and astrologer, he was the most illustrious representative of what at that time were known as the “sciences of the ancients” and for a long time in Christian Europe he was mistakenly considered the author of a famous treatise on magic called *Picatrix*. He is not, however, the only *madrileño* to have entered the history books nor the only person to have used the demonym al-Majriti. The names of various other characters who were born and/or lived in Madrid have survived in biographical dictionaries and historical chronicles, although none of these were as well-known as Maslama al-Majriti or as the *alim* (expert in Islamic doctrine and law) Abu Umar al-Talamanki, who was also named after the place where he was born (Talamanca de Jarama) and whose fame went far beyond the boundaries of al-Andalus.



11th chess piece made of fired soapstone. Discovered on the site of the house of St Isidore. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]

The first accredited inhabitant of Madrid was a man called Ubayd Allah ibn Salim in the year 870 or 871. According to the chronicles, he intercepted a rebel from Toledo called Masuya who was fleeing north and killed him. These two are therefore the first live man and the first dead man from Madrid of whom we have record. The *nasab* or patronymic *ibn Salim*, which means “son of Salim” links him back to a famous tribe, the Beni Salim or “sons of Salim”, a Berber lineage, who arrived in the Peninsula in the early days of al-Andalus. They were strongly established in the Marca Media (Middle March) frontier region, where they even founded a city bearing the name of the patriarch of the clan: *Madinat Salim*, “city of Salim”, known today as Medinaceli. It is also said that the original name of Guadalajara,

Madinat Faraj or “city of Faraj”, came from the military chief Faraj ibn Salim, who was a son or grandson of the first *madrileño* mentioned above. It was not uncommon therefore that some of the writers of the period referred to them as “Princes of the Frontier” and called the region itself “the frontier of the Beni Salim”. It seems highly likely that they were the first *madrileños*, and it is even possible that the city was constructed on their initiative and that only later as a result of their alliance with the Umayyads of Cordoba, was the foundation of the city attributed to the Emir Muhammad I. The first governor of Madrid who is described as such in the chronicles was Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Ubayd Allah, who seems likely to have been the grandson of that first inhabitant mentioned above and was appointed by the Caliph Abd al-Rahman III in the year 930, at the same time as Garsiya ibn Ahmad (a “native” Iberian judging by his name García) was made Governor of Talamanca and a Berber, Arzaq ibn Maysara, governed Guadalajara. As the central power gradually consolidated its position in the frontier areas, the power of the Beni Salim began to wane in both Madrid and Guadalajara, which changed its name from *Madinat Faraj* to that of the nearby River, *Wad al-Hijara*.

The rollcall of scholars was much longer than that of governors. Those *madrileños* with intellectual inclinations normally went away to study in more important cities such as Toledo or Cordoba, or even to the Orient and often did not return. We know of several of these, whose origin is revealed by their toponymic *al-Majriti*. The most famous of these was of course, Maslama al-Majriti, whom his biographers described as the most important mathematician of his time and wiser than all those who had preceded him in the science of the stars. Despite his enormous fame and influence, very little is known about the life of Maslama al-Majriti, starting for example with his birthdate, which must have been around the middle of the 10th century. His life was spent in Cordoba, where he became known above all for his comments on the tables by the Persian mathematician al-Juwarizmi (after whom algorithms and algorisms are named), to which he made several alterations to adapt them to the meridian of Cordoba and to the Islamic calendar, given that the original tables used the Persian calendar. He also wrote notes and additions to the *Almagest* by Claudius Ptolemy. Maslama was also famous as an astrologer. He was said to have predicted that the coming together of Saturn and Jupiter in the year 398 Hegira (1006-1007) would cause terrible disasters, including a change in the ruling dynasty, something which did indeed come to pass. Maslama died the following year in 399 (1007-1008). More recently, it was alleged that he had a daughter and disciple called Fatima of Madrid, although she never really existed.



Surgical probes. 9th-11th centuries. Found in the Cuesta de la Vega, Madrid [Photo: Miguel Ángel Otero Ibañez]

After spending most of their lives abroad, some of these illustrious *madrileños* eventually returned to their city of birth. This was the case of Abu Umar al-Talamanki, who was born in Talamanca in the year 951, and later educated in Cordoba with some of the most important masters of the Islamic sciences. He then embarked on a voyage to the Orient during which, in addition to fulfilling his obligation to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, he also completed his education. He lived and studied with several different teachers in Mecca itself and then in Medina, Cairo, Damietta and Kairouan, before returning to al-Andalus with his head full of knowledge, something about which his biographers are most insistent. As a very old, famous man he decided to devote his last years to instructing his fellow Talamancans. One of his pupils was Abu Ya'qub Yusuf ibn Hammad (1004/1005-1080/1081), who was as *madrileño* as you can get, given that as well as

being the son of a *madrileño*, he himself was born and died in Madrid. It was common for preachers to belong to the same families and for sons to be pupils or disciples of their fathers. Abu Ya'qub belonged to the Beni Hammad, one of the best-known families in Madrid. Just like his master before him, after studying with teachers from al-Andalus, he set off on a long pilgrimage to Mecca. Like many others at this time, he made the most of this experience by spending long periods in different cities where he completed his education: as well as Mecca itself, he also lived and learned from different teachers in Cairo, Barqa (a city in Libya which has now disappeared) and Tripoli.

But Madrid was not just a point of emigration, it also attracted intellectuals such as the two men we have just mentioned, who were *ulama* (pl. of *alim*), experts in Islamic sciences, a field



Gate known as “La Puerta de la Villa” in Talamanca de Jarama. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

which covered a broad compass, including studies of the Koran, prophetic tradition, jurisprudence, theology, the Arabic language, literature and history. The sources mention 22 *ulama* related with Madrid, five with Talamanca and three with Alcalá, a fairly low figure in comparison with the 60 *ulama* who were known to live in Guadalajara, and which paled beside the 224 *ulama* in Toledo in the 10th and 11th centuries alone. If aspiring scholars from Madrid tended to emigrate, why did so many *ulama* come to the city? This was because of *ribat*, a very widespread practice amongst these religious men which involved retreating for some time —or perhaps forever— to a town on the frontier. This enabled them to live an ascetic life and to take part in the defence of the Islamic-controlled territories, at times by taking up arms and on other occasions by teaching the local population and the troops.

The work of the *ulama* was crucial in the dissemination of Islam and of the Arabic language amongst the population, which would imply that Madrid could be considered a small cultural beacon for the surrounding area. One of the exhibits in the Museo de San Isidro is a bone fragment with the letters of the Arabic alphabet clumsily engraved on it, which would suggest that it was used for teaching purposes. This must



Planispheric astrolabe made in brass in Toledo by Ibrahim Ibn Sa'id al-Sahli in around 1067. Museo Arqueológico Nacional. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumea]

have been the vocation of the famous faqih Ibn al-Qazzaz from Cordoba, who in the year 887 in a gesture of ascetism and virtue rejected the post of Qadi that had been offered to him by the Emir Muhammad I, and instead retired to Madrid to do *ribat* together with his son Ahmad and two disciples, who were also called Ahmad. The three Ahmads were soon to mourn the death of their master, who fell ill on the way to Madrid and had to be taken to Toledo, where he died. Another of those on *ribat* was Jassas al-Zahid, from Sijilmasa, an important city in the north-western Sahara which has now disappeared. It would seem that Jassas devoted his time in Madrid to explaining a book about ascetism by Yumn ibn Rizq, a mystic from Tudela (*Tutilla*), who is said to have had the gift of being in two places at the same time, amongst other amazing anecdotes. In 1051, the *alim* from Toledo Musa ibn Qasim ibn Jadir was mortally wounded by the Christian armies of Castile and León in an ambush in the *fahs* of La Salmedina. The last foreigner who came to Madrid to do the *ribat* was Abu l-Walid Yunus al-Azdi, known as Ibn Shuquh, a nickname that Jaime Oliver Asín interpreted as a bilingual hybrid between Arabic and Romance: Ibn Chueco, in other words “son of the knock-kneed one”. This man whom the sources describe as affectionate and good-natured, died in Madrid on 7th December 1081.



Above: Bone fragment with the inscription *bismi-l-lah* (in the name of God), 10th-12th centuries. Found in the Plaza del Rollo. On display at the Museo Arqueológico Regional. Below: Cow shoulder-blade with the first letters of the Arabic alphabet. 11th century. Found in Calle Cava Baja nº 11. On display at the Museo de San Isidro. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]

An Andalusian saint?

This leads us in perfectly to talk about the person, who for most of today's *madrileños* was the city's most famous inhabitant: St Isidore (San Isidro), who was also Andalusian. Legend has it that Isidore was born in *Majrit* in April 1082, and that he was a Mozarabic Christian and therefore completely Andalusian. However, rather than getting distracted by legend and the details of his hagiography, which at the end of the day is just a fairy story invented to justify his canonization, we should perhaps focus on his personal traits and the adventure that took him to sainthood. The first record we have of an attempt to canonize St Isidore was in 1562, one year after Philip II decided to make Madrid his capital city. The still small Villa of Madrid was lacking in many things required for the capital of an Empire, one of which was that it had no patron saint. To this end, the authorities decided to appropriate a popular cult in honour of Isidore the "Man of God", a humble mediaeval farmhand whose supposedly incorrupt body had been found at the beginning of the century in the Church of San Andrés.

Many of the details about the saint's life were written to support the canonization process. Many were the fruit of popular tradition or



St Isidore the Farmer. [Image: Old Collection of Seville University Library]

were directly invented, as was probably the case with the alleged link between Isidore and the Vargas family, one of the oldest and most powerful lineages in the Madrid oligarchy at the time. The fact is that the Vatican were quite reluctant to canonize this “extravagant” Saint, as Alonso de Villegas apparently dubbed him, and did not finally do so until March 1622. Why such reservations? The Saints normally chosen by the Church at that time tended not to be humble, ordinary people: instead they

were inimitable, exceptional, and normally held ecclesiastic or noble positions, such as priests, nuns, bishops, kings and knights. They were people who devoted their body and soul to the service of God, abandoning all earthly, social and family life. Isidore, by contrast, was a farmhand and a serf, a husband and father, whose miracles involved things that mattered to country people such as sowing the seed, rain, food and wolves.

Two historians from the Complutense University, Matilde Fernández and Cristina Segura, argued that Isidore’s life was reminiscent of that of the “friends of God” or mystic masters of Islam. For example, his determination to live on the fruit of his own manual labour, the divine aid when he had to put the spiritual before the earthly, his tendency to conceal his miracles, his peaceful, calm death, his relationship with nature and animals and, very importantly, his marriage and family life, which in Christianity was often seen as a black mark for spiritual purposes, while in Islam was quite the opposite. Another striking feature was his relationship with water, as seen



One of the wells in which according to legend St Isidore performed a miracle. Inside the Chapel of Santa María la Antigua in Carabanchel Bajo. [Image: Mercedes Gómez]

in the miracle of the well or the miracle of the spring that gushed from his crook, legends that are almost carbon copies of those associated with mystics in Morocco and Algeria. These authors go on to suggest that the fictional character of Isidore could be the product of a Christian-Muslim syncretism, with its earliest roots in Andalusian Madrid and which later developed as a popular cult in Christian, Muslim and Jewish Madrid.

There would be nothing strange in this: in contrast to the claims of propagandists who champion the exclusiveness of different cultures and the clash between them, religions in close contact with each other have frequently shared, at least amongst the common people, spaces of worship and indeed ceremonies, in which each religion gives its own particular meaning to worship, a practice that can be seen throughout the Mediterranean region. There is an interesting example associated with Madrid quite near Villatobas in the province of Toledo. About 10 km from the village there is a small chapel on top of a hill, which for centuries was a popular destination for *romerías*, festive pilgrimages to country chapels. It is thought that this place was originally the tomb of al-Shifa, the adoptive mother of the Emir Muhammad I, the founder of Madrid. Al-Shifa became ill and died while accompanying her son on an expedition through the Marca Media and was buried on this hill known in Arabic as *Fajj al-Bushra* or “Pass of the Good News” and in Spanish as Montealegre. Due to her fame as a philanthropist and a very pious woman (she commissioned the construction of a mosque in Cordoba), her tomb became a place of popular devotion, firstly in the Islamic form of *ziyarat* (pilgrimages to obtain her *baraka* or divine grace) and later under the advocacy of a Catholic female saint. It seems likely that many more of these country chapels, which can be found across the length and breadth of Spain, could have similar origins, especially those which like Santa Catalina are clearly oriented towards Mecca. Many of these places of popular worship may have even older origins, which have been maintained within different social and religious frameworks.

It is important to bear in mind that the majority Muslim society of al-Andalus had itself incorporated many elements of cultural and religious syncretism such as for example the celebration of the Christian New Year, which was called *Yannayr* (January) or *Nayruz* (New Year in Persian), or the Festival of the Summer Solstice (St John the Baptist), which was called *Ansara* or *Mihrajan*. The sources tell that during the Festival of *Yannayr* special delicacies were eaten, presents were exchanged and the children who attended school were given holidays. There was even the custom

of decorating the house with model cities (*mada'in*) made of sweet pasta and dried fruits, creating a sort of edible *belén*.¹⁷ It is also worth remembering that some of the most typical sweets of Spanish Christmas time, such as *mazapanes*, *turrones*, *alfajores* and *mantecados*, are of Andalusian origin.

Getting back to Saint Isidore, there is a striking coincidence between the year on which the saint is said to have been born and the real date of death of Ibn Chueco. This raises the question as to whether the figure of the saint may have been based on this wise man from Toledo, or perhaps on a disciple to whom the master may have passed on his *baraka* or intimacy with the divine presence and providence, as is believed to have happened with these “friends of God”. This would create a somewhat paradoxical situation in which two of the most important religious icons of Christian Madrid, namely the Virgin of the Almudena and St Isidore, had unexpected connections with Islamic *Majrit*.

The minorities: Christians and Jews

Setting legend and St Isidore aside for the moment, were there really Christians and Jews in *Majrit*? The answer is probably yes, given that at the time the city was founded, Islam was still not the majority religion in al-Andalus society. The presence of a large community of Jews and Christians in Toledo and the prevailing frontier atmosphere could lead us perhaps to imagine a Madrid of many creeds. It is important to bear in mind that the *dhimmis*, the communities subject to the special statute of the *dhimma* or “protection” — which guaranteed their freedom of worship and their own civil legislation under certain conditions — were commonplace in the frontier regions, where they acted as facilitators of all kinds of contacts between one side and the other. Frontiers were not only war zones, they were also places through which travellers and trade would have flowed (luxury goods from al-Andalus and the Orient were highly valued in the kingdom of León for example), and in this sense, the fact that Madrid had a large inhabited area that was not protected by walls shows that it was not a city devoted exclusively to war.

However, the hard evidence is very scarce. Of the 19 representatives of the people of Madrid who swore and confirmed the *Fuero de Toledo* in 1118, 33 years after the conquest, four Mozarabic Christians signed in Arabic, which suggests that a substantial community of this origin existed in Madrid. Their names were totally Arabic: Ali ibn Khayr, Abd Allah ibn Hazim, Abd Allah ibn Faqir and Abu l-Hasan ibn Mikayil. Another Mozarabic *madrileño*, Michael Halboarach, is mentioned in a document dated 1142. In spite of these references, we cannot be sure that this community was present in Madrid prior to the conquest or was the result of resettlement by the Castilians. Perhaps the strongest sign of Christian presence in Islamic *Majrit* are the pig bones found in two of the silos. Any pork consumed in the city would have been eaten by Christian inhabitants, as both Muslims and Jews were forbidden to eat it. However, this is a very weak piece of evidence to try to extrapolate into estimates of the number and the possible characteristics of this Christian population, if indeed it existed. The same could be said for the Jews, whose presence in Madrid is widely accredited in the Christian period from the *Fuero* of 1212 onwards, although there is no clear factual evidence that there were Jews in Islamic Madrid.



Piece of ceramic with the Star of David. 14th-15th centuries. Found in the Cuesta de la Vega. On display in the Museo de San Isidro. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]

As regards the relations between the communities, it is frequently assumed that there were separate districts for the different religious confessions, as happened with the Jewish and Moorish quarters (*juderías* and *morerías*) in the Christian era. However, it is not clear that this was the pattern in the cities of al-Andalus, or at least not throughout all of its history. On the contrary, sources from this period described the way Christians and Muslims lived alongside each other, cheek by jowl, and that there were even mixed families due to the conversion to Islam of some of their members or due to marriages between Muslims and Christians. There were also many examples of religious syncretism as often happens when two religions come into contact with each other. This close contact between religions was quite frequent but also produced a lot of headaches for the lawmakers, given that each religion was governed by a different set of laws. The frequent complaints and warnings from the puritans of all religions about the contact between the different communities is a sign that this contact was commonplace and that everyday life took place within a shared space.



Lid made of bone. 10th-11th centuries. Found in the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid. [Photo: MAR/Mario Torquemada]



Almanzor and General Ghalib near Madrid in a Romantic lithograph from *La Historia de la Villa y Corte* by Amador de los Ríos (1860).

From Majrit to Magerit: the madrileños between two worlds

The 11th century was one of great upheavals in Madrid. The year 1002 saw the death of General *al-Mansur* (Almanzor), “the Victorious”, the real power behind the throne of Caliph Hisham. His death and succession by his son Abd al-Rahman *Sanchuelo* —the grandson on his mother’s side of King Sancho Garcés II of Pamplona— gave rise to a long civil war in which various brief caliphs succeeded each other and at the end of which the Caliphate was dismembered and al-Andalus

entered a long period of decline. Madrid had its own candidate to the throne, an unusual character who rebelled in the year 1023 or 1024 against the penultimate Umayyad Caliph, al-Mustakfi (less known for his own merits than for those of his daughter Wallada, a poet and woman of the world who became one of the great cultural references of al-Andalus). The character in question was called Ghulam al-Attar, which could be translated as Ghulam “the perfumer”. He was totally unknown, he may even have been a slave, but it seems that he had the gift of the gab — so much so that he was nicknamed *al-fasih*, “the eloquent”. He adopted the guise of Ubayd Allah, the son of the Caliph al-Mahdi, who had died some years earlier, and managed to gather a small movement behind him, as according to his biographer al-Humaydi, he “managed to deceive quite a number of people”.¹⁸ Ultimately, however, Ghulam *the Eloquent* proved unsuccessful. He was betrayed and died.

For Toledo, however, the war helped it recover its independent, rebellious spirit. After various internal power struggles, the people of Toledo offered the city and its territories to the Berber clan of the Beni Dhi l-Nun, who founded the Kingdom of Toledo, one of the many *taifas* or fractions into which al-Andalus had been divided. Madrid formed part of this *taifa* from the very beginning. The Kings of the *taifas* made up for their political and military weakness by competing between each other as to who had the most cultured, most splendid Court, which is why the second King of Toledo, al-Ma'mun, made his kingdom a place of refuge for all kinds of scholars and poets and embellished the city. He also tried to expand his territories at the expense of the *taifas* of Zaragoza and of Badajoz and tried to take Cordoba. Most of his military efforts however were spent trying to stave off the onslaughts of King Ferdinand I of León, who from the middle of the century began to launch attacks on the Madrid region.

Fernando's forces began to overrun and colonize large tracts of land to the south of the River Duero. The arrival of huge numbers of settlers meant that the areas of influence of the cities to the north of the Sistema Central were extending ever more quickly southwards, until they colonized the southern flanks of the Sierra, which apparently was the origin of the territorial wrangling between Madrid and Segovia throughout the late Middle Ages. The reference to the Bridge of *Maqida* as the western boundary of the Muslim territories dates from this period. In 1057 Fernando I penetrated the north of the Kingdom of Toledo and some years later, probably in the summer of 1062, gathered a “very large army, and went to conquer the land of the Moors”,

taking Muslim castles and towers to the north of the Sistema Central. Once he had done this—according to the *Historia silense*— he turned south again, setting fire to Talamanca, razing its fields and making off with large amounts of booty and large numbers of women and children, before continuing on towards Alcalá and Madrid which he also “burnt and destroyed”, “and slayed so many Moors as to lose count and destroyed many other places in the Kingdom of Toledo”.¹⁹ The chronicler summarizes his description of this campaign by saying that he killed or imprisoned so many “Moors”, in other words inhabitants of the Madrid Region, that it was impossible to count. The main accounts, *Historia silense* and the *Estoria de España* disagree as to whether it was the inhabitants of Alcalá or of Guadalajara who, seeing themselves surrounded by the war machines, begged al-Ma'mun to buy the peace by becoming a vassal to Fernando. In the end this is what happened and Toledo entered the system of *parias*, a tribute paid by the weakened taifa kingdoms in an attempt to contain the increasingly intense military pressure from the North.

On his death, Fernando I divided his possessions amongst his sons, as if they were country estates: León for Alfonso, Galicia for García and Castile for Sancho, his eldest son. Sancho wasted no time before declaring war on his brothers. He began by eliminating García and in January 1072 he was



The so-called “Roman Bridge” at Valdemaqueda could be the “Bridge of Maqida” mentioned by al-Idrisi as marking the boundary of the area under Islamic rule in the Madrid area. [Photo: Dirección General de Turismo. Comunidad de Madrid]

crowned King of León. Alfonso was forced into exile with a handful of loyal supporters at the court of his ally and vassal al-Ma'mun, who took him in, proudly offering him all his hospitality, until in October that year, after Sancho had died, he accompanied Alfonso along the *Balat Humayd* to the mountain pass of Tablada, by which Alfonso returned to León.

Legend has it that King Alfonso was so awestruck by the magnificence of the Court of Toledo that he felt an enormous urge to add it to his extensive dominions, especially after overhearing a conversation about the weak points in the defence of the city. The truth is that the Kingdom of Toledo was coveted by all its neighbours, who set about conquering it when al-Ma'mun died in 1075 and was succeeded by his grandson al-Qadir, a man considered “weak and of little wisdom”, according to the historian Ibn al-Kardabus, who said that “the slaves took matters into their own hands and each man born and each eunuch governed over him, all of them exercised their power at will and had the exclusive run of the Vizierate. The Princes coveted his dominions and both allies



Remains of the *Balat Humayd* and the Venta de Tablada, possible site of the last Andalusian staging post before crossing the mountains. [Photos: Ricardo Fanjul]

and strangers vilified him”.²⁰ The historian Ibn Bassam of Santarem bitterly recounts, in his *Treasury of the beautiful qualities of the people of the Peninsula*, the internal struggles and rebellions that took place against the King of Toledo, in which Madrid took part, and the extreme cruelty of the repression wrought by the Sultan, “which calmed the spirit of the angry one and made the rotten jaws of the dead laugh”.²¹

This did not however bring the problems to an end. In the year 1081, the people of Toledo rose up yet again, expelling al-Qadir, and offered the Kingdom to the Sultan of Badajoz (*Batalyaws*), al-Mutawakkil, who took control of the city. Al-Mutawakkil immediately headed for the north of the Kingdom to force the frontier towns to submit to his rule, something that he achieved either by force in the case of Guadalajara, or through a pact, as happened with Madrid: “When Madrid beheld your face, it became an obedient servant to your mighty power. / They reached for your palm branch of peace, of which you are the Lord and Master, and they entered into pacts and covenants”,²² wrote the Vizier Umar al-Tujibi al-Tulaytuli in a poem. Alfonso VI attacked Toledo in defence of his ally and vassal al-Qadir and managed to put him back on the throne,



Watchtower of Venturada. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumea]



Alfonso VI in front of the walls of Madrid. Lithograph from *Historia de la Villa y Corte* by Amador de los Ríos (1860).

although effective government remained beyond his grasp. In the end, therefore, the Sultan of Toledo decided to hand over his kingdom to his protector in exchange for his help in the conquest of Valencia. In the words of Ibn al-Kardabus:

When al-Qadir came to the conclusion that he was incapable of protecting himself and that he was defenceless against them, he wrote to Alfonso, granting him Toledo and its districts, so that he might help him to take Valencia and its dominions.

Alfonso came rushing to Toledo, marching day and night, and when he arrived, the city was handed over to him, remaining inside it the people and the children, after the condition had been imposed that he would guarantee the security of the Muslims that remained within it.²³

Alfonso VI arrived in Toledo in 1083 and made himself at home in the famous Palace of al-Ma'mun for the next two years. Outside the walls however he had to deal with the latest uprising by the people of Toledo. Finally, on 6th May 1085, unable to continue resisting the siege, the city surrendered and the Kingdom fell with it, Madrid included. Ibn al-Kardabus describes it as follows:

When the tyrant Alfonso, may God curse him, took Toledo, he was overcome by pride, as he thought that the reins of al-Andalus were now in his hands. He then launched attacks against all its districts, until he finally managed to conquer all the dominions of Ibn Dhi l-Nun and take possession of them. These included 80 cities with a great mosque, without counting the flourishing villages and hamlets.²⁴

Toledo had belonged to *dar al-Islam*, the House of Islam, recalled Ibn al-Kardabus, for 388 years and we should add here that Madrid was born within this house and remained within it for about 225 years. The conquest of the Kingdom of Toledo, which happened at the same time as the conquest of the Emirate of Sicily by the Normans and as the First Crusade, was of enormous transcendence not only in al-Andalus, but also in the rest of the Islamic world. “Spur on your steeds, people of al-Andalus, as to stay would surely be a mistake. Garments tend to unravel at the edges, but I see that the Peninsula has unravelled at the centre”,²⁵ said the Toledo ascetic Abd Allah al-Assal in some well-known verses when he saw his city fall into Christian hands. It was the first time that a Muslim ruler had felt obliged to abandon a territory where they had governed for centuries and whose inhabitants were part of the cultural universe of Islam, including those who were not Muslims, as was the case with the substantial Christian and Jewish communities.

El Campo del Moro

The Chronicles refer to various Muslim attempts to reconquer Madrid, although only one of these appears to be true. Seeing their future in danger, the kingdoms of al-Andalus, turned for help to the Almoravids,²⁶ who proved successful in halting the Christian advance (at the battle of *al-Zallaqa*, or Sagradas) but in so doing also brought an end to the Taifa kingdoms, after seizing power in and reuniting much of al-Andalus. The compiler of chronicles, Ibn Abi Zar‘ (who died around 1320 in Fez) claimed an effective conquest of the city by the Almoravid Emir Ali ibn Yusuf in 1109, another one by the Almohad²⁷ caliph al-Mansur in 1196 and finally a third conquest by

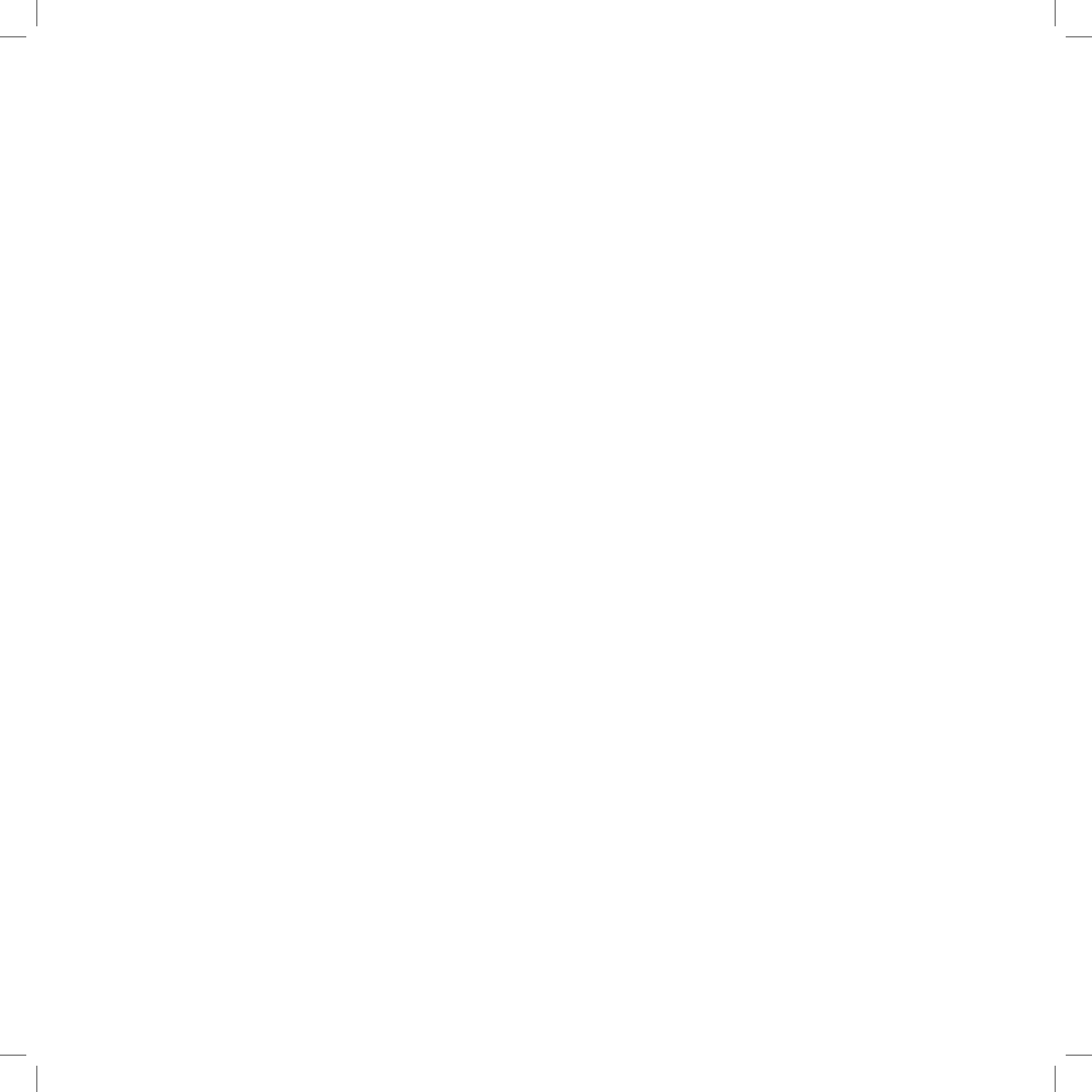


Western flank of Madrid on the map by Teixeira (1656). At the foot of the city you can see the open space known as La Tela, which may have been the site of the *almuzara* in the al-Andalus era, and the area known today as Campo del Moro, which was then just called “El Parque” (the Park).

the Marinid²⁸ Emir Abu Yusuf, who disembarked in the Peninsula to support King Alfonso X in his attempt to put down a rebellion led by his son Sancho and allegedly reached the gates of Madrid in 1282. The first of these accounts give rise to a historiographic tradition, which suggests that the name of the Campo del Moro (literally Field of the Moor) derived from its use as an Almoravid camp. However, present-day criticism considers that both this expedition and that of 1282 were more the product of the storytelling talents of the chronicler, who in an attempt to glorify the heroic deeds of the Muslims exaggerated the geographical scope of their campaigns. The one in 1196 is however more probable and is mentioned by other authors, although it would appear to have been more of a show of force in front of the walls of Madrid rather than an actual conquest. Apparently, the Almohad Sultan had advanced from Cordoba to Talavera and from there to Toledo, where news reached him that the troops of Alfonso VIII had joined up with those of the Count of Barcelona and had gathered in Madrid. Ibn Idari described it like this:

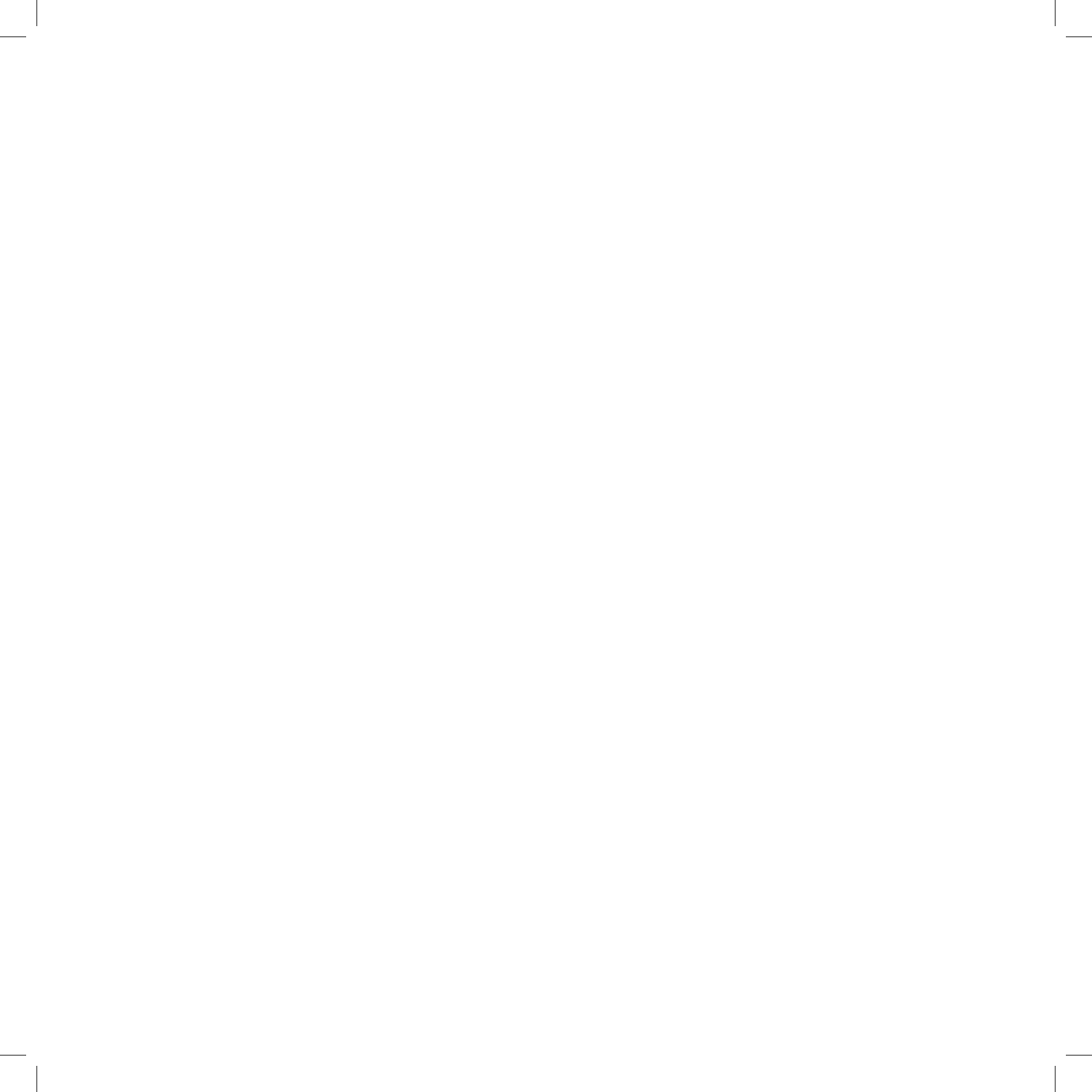
[...] Then news arrived that the infidel from Barcelona was helping Alfonso with his men and his warriors, who were in the Castle of Madrid advancing and retreating, and launching themselves at that which they did not execute. Al-Mansur directed himself against them, with the firmness of one who trusts in the Highest one, trusting that their feet would slip and that perhaps a fateful destiny would befall them. When the Muslims had this Castle in sight, they surrounded it just like the halo surrounds the full moon and intensified their invocations, ejaculatory prayers and praises of the Highest one, so much so that the entrails of the rocks were about to burst open and the bones of the dead were about to shake within their tombs, such was the clamour. And in that way they dispersed Alfonso's armies, his allies abandoned him and he took shelter in the mountains from whence he had come, with his regrets and his fears.²⁹

The fact is that as far as we know, Madrid was never again under Muslim rule and that it was soon too far from the battle lines to suffer the consequences of war.



The Mudejars:

the Muslim minority in mediaeval Madrid



And we say that the Moors must live amongst the Christians in the same way as we said in the article before this one that the Jews must do, keeping their laws and not reviling ours.

Alfonso X, Partida VII, XXV, I

Conquest and exile

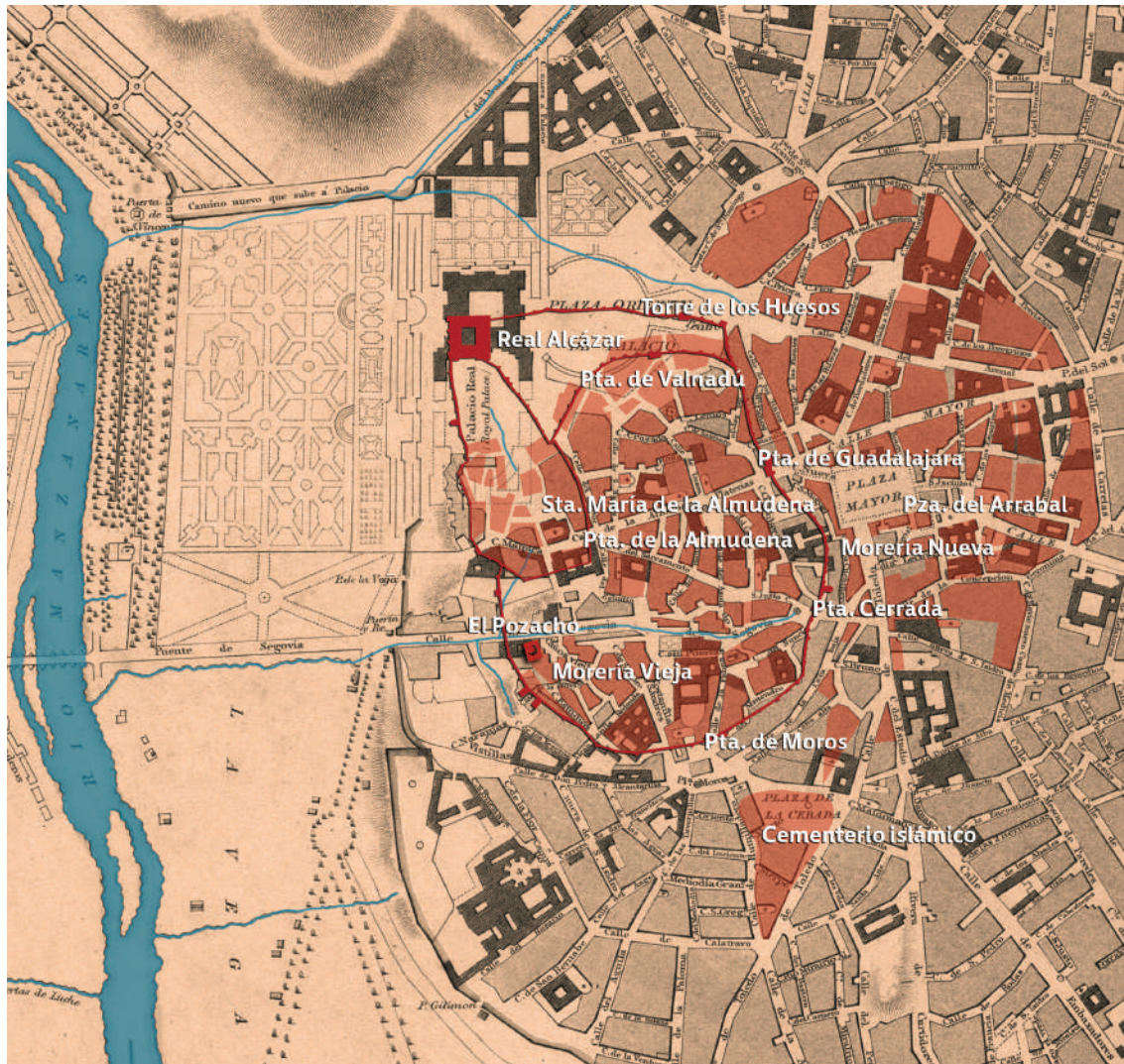
Alfonso VI's conquest opened up a new era, in which the Muslims of Madrid and the rest of the Kingdom found themselves in new, uncharted waters. The fact that Toledo surrendered after negotiation meant that it was necessary to find formulas for the maintenance of its population under Christian rule, instead of them being expelled or enslaved, as happened with the cities taken by storm. This situation, which was completely new, was a huge source of worry on both the Muslim and Christian sides as to the best way to coexist. Muslims had a long tradition of coexistence with Christians and Jews, but this was the first time that they would have to do so from a subordinate position. At the same time on the Christian side there was a heated debate between those who refused to accept the presence within their dominions of any other faith that was not that of Christ and those



Mudejar arch in the apse of the Chapel of Santa María la Antigua, in Carabanchel Bajo. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

who, in a more practical way, sought to strike a balance between the peaceful integration of the large mass of Muslim population and the affirmation of Catholicism as the one true faith. Alfonso VI was of the latter opinion and the result was that the surrender agreement signed by al-Qadir gave the Muslims of Toledo the freedom to leave or to stay and even to leave and return later. It also guaranteed that they could practice their religion and would have the use of their great Mosque in perpetuity. They would also be subject to the payment of a special tax.

However, not all of Alfonso's allies agreed with him and the King had to respond to the criticisms of those who argued that Jews and Muslims should be forbidden from practising their faith. Even the Christians of al-Andalus, known as Mozarabs, raised certain suspicions. Although they were Catholics, they had their own specific liturgy, which was different from the Gregorian ritual that was by then establishing itself throughout Europe. They also used their mother tongue, Arabic, in some of their rituals and books. One little known aspect of the so-called "reconquest" of Spain was that it was not only the work of a few Christians from the north of the Peninsula, and that like the Crusades, people from all over Europe



Reconstruction of 15th century Madrid on a map by W.B. Clarke from 1831. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeya]

took part, especially given the alliances between Alfonso and the House of Burgundy. The different forms of cultural expression in al-Andalus, with which the Christians from the Iberian Peninsula were quite familiar, to the extent that they had incorporated a lot of them into their everyday habits, were however completely exotic for these other Europeans. As a result, although Alfonso VI had assured the Muslims of Toledo that they would be able to keep their Great Mosque forever, just two months after the conquest it was consecrated as a Cathedral perhaps in a bid to please his allies. In 1089 the same thing happened with all the other great mosques situated to the south of the mountain pass of “Balatomer” —*Balat Humayd* or Tablada—, in other words

all the mosques in the newly conquered kingdom, including that of Madrid, so ushering in a long tradition in which the agreements reached with conquered Muslims were repeatedly breached.

The term *Mudejar* which is used to refer to the Muslims who lived in Christian-ruled areas comes from the Arabic word *mudajjan*, which is normally translated as “tamed”, although it also means “he who stays” or “he who gets used to”. Nonetheless, as occurs with the term *Mozarab*, it was more a historiographical name than a historical one, in that in their time the Mudejares were not normally called as such and were generally referred to simply as *Moros* or Moors, which is why here we will normally refer to them simply as Muslims. The Muslims who lived in Madrid under Christian rule were mentioned for the first time in the *Fuero de la Villa* of 1202. Given the complete absence of documents between the conquest and



La Puerta de Moros or Gate of the Moors was the entrance to Mediaeval Madrid that was nearest to the Muslim quarter or Morería. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

the Fuero, we do not know to what extent the Muslim community of Madrid was made up of descendants of the inhabitants of Madrid prior to the conquest or of Muslims who had arrived from other places together with the Christian conquerors, perhaps as settlers or as prisoners. It seems highly likely that part of the original Muslim population would have abandoned the city in the period immediately before or after the conquest to move to regions that remained under Islamic control, a practice that was repeated throughout the Kingdom of Toledo.

However not everyone could afford to uproot themselves and restart their lives elsewhere. The economic, administrative, intellectual and religious elites were more likely to be forced into exile and also to have sufficient resources to enable them to leave. The biographical dictionaries of al-Andalus make no mention of scholars or men of letters living under Christian rule, while there are many references to them emigrating at the time of the conquest or shortly before or afterwards, as also happened in Madrid. The same would have happened with a large number of the small traders and craftsmen. But it seems very possible that the *amma*, or common people, would have preferred the uncertainty of a change of regime to that of exile, or even that the possibility of making this choice never even occurred to them. It is also possible that some of those who fled into exile in the face of the Christian advance decided to return home once the storm had died down.

There is a curious anecdote about the *madrileños* who went into exile, which involves the grandfather of the philosopher Averroes, Abu l-Walid Muhammad ibn Rushd. This man had the same name as his famous grandson and died the year he was born (1126). Averroes *the Elder* was an important judge in Cordoba and of the many cases that he had to try, there was one in which two *madrileños* came to him asking for justice. One of them had been employed by the other to do a job in exchange for a salary which would be paid in food. The fall of Madrid to the Christians interrupted this arrangement and both men ended up in Cordoba, where the contracted man demanded his salary from his employer. The problem was that in the big city in the south food, or grain, cost twice as much as in the small city in the north. The judge had to decide whether, as the employer argued, he should pay half the agreed amount or whether, as the other party contended, he should pay the full amount in kind initially agreed. It seems that Averroes's grandfather was succeeded in his post by the son of another exiled *madrileño*, with his give-away "surname" *al-Majriti*.



Mudejar arch conserved inside a hotel in Villavieja del Lozoya. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

The experience of being a minority

The Muslim community in Madrid grew over time and would have been about average size compared to those in other towns and cities in Castile. Even so, they were a small minority compared to the Christian population, which had grown much faster thanks to the process of colonization known as *repoblación* (repopulation), which had converted the small Madrid of al-Andalus into a “Villa” that played quite an important role within the crown of Castile. We do not know exactly how many Muslims there were in Madrid over the course of its history or what percentage of the Madrid population they represented. The only available data are from the last years of the 15th century in which there were between 50 and 52 houses, which would have meant about 260 people. But it is well-known that in previous years the Muslim community of Madrid had fallen sharply due to the intensification of the measures aimed at marginalizing them adopted by the Courts of Toledo in 1480. This caused many Muslims to emigrate to places where the laws were more favourable to them or where they could find the support of a much larger Muslim community. Queen

Isabella herself noted this trend: “This Villa is losing more and more people every day, especially now after my order that the Jews and the Moors must live apart”.³⁰ At that time, the overall population of Madrid would have been around 8,000 people, which means the Muslim minority were about 2.5%, which was not bad considering that prior to the conquest of Granada, Muslims accounted for just 0.5% of the population of Castile. However, as a community they were more important than this low percentage would suggest, given that their members or at least their elite were very well integrated into the society of the Villa, in spite of the discriminatory legal system.

Almost from the beginning the Muslims concentrated in the Parish of San Andrés, in what is today Las Vistillas. As the community grew in number, the need arose for them to be organized in a legal and administrative sense, which took place with the constitution of the *aljama* of Madrid. The *aljama*, from the Arabic *al-jama'a*, which means “assembly”, was the name of the administrative body that represented the Muslim community in its dealings with the Christian authorities and should not be confused (as often happens) with the neighbourhood or physical place of residence of the Muslims, which was known by the generic name of *morería* or Moorish quarter. In addition to the *aljama* of Madrid, there was another one in the region in Alcalá de Henares, and the Muslims in smaller towns would have associated themselves with one of the two. The *aljama* was headed by an *alcalde* (the modern Spanish word for “Mayor”), which comes—both the position itself and the word— from *al-qadi*, the Qadi or Muslim judge. The *alcalde* acted as the head of the community and as a judge of internal civil disputes within the *aljama*, as criminal cases were tried by the normal justice system.

The documents mention some of the *madrileños* who held the post of *alcalde* of the *aljama*: a man called Mahomad in 1348, Master Hamete, a shearman, in 1402, and Master Lope, son of Yuçaf, in 1480. Documents from 1500 mention two people: O Abraen of San Salvador, a master builder, and Yuçaf or Yuçuf Mellado, unusual characters who will appear again later on in our story. There is also a record of an *alcalde* of Alcalá de Henares in 1351, called Ali Xarafi. He was a member of an important family from Toledo who judging by their name must have originated in the Aljarafe near Seville. The “*alcalde de los moros*” was appointed by the Crown and acted above all as the representative of the Christian authorities in their dealings with the Muslim community rather than the other way around. The *alcaldes* did not always enjoy the support of their assemblies,

as can be seen in the numerous documents in which Muslims complained about the way they acted, and at times had to ask for protection from the ordinary justice system. The *alcalde* Lope of Madrid, for example was also theoretically the *alcalde* of the *aljama* of Segovia, but they never accepted him, preferring instead to submit to Christian jurisdiction.

The assemblies of Muslims and Jews were almost like “parallel” structures to the normal administration, in that they had powers in legal and fiscal matters and only answered to the Crown. However not all the Local Councils were prepared to tolerate this independence and in practice disputed the control over these assemblies with the Crown, frequently with the support of the Muslims themselves. In the case of Madrid, the real independence of the assembly was limited to its internal religious affairs and very rarely did they circumvent the authority of the Council by appealing directly to the King, even though they were entitled to do so. This tacit understanding between the assembly and the Council benefited both sides in that it meant that the Council held sway over all the residents of the city, and in exchange protected the Muslims by for example mediating with the Crown on their behalf on tax issues or by applying the rules about segregation laxly.

The Muslims of Madrid, like the Jews, were subject to a legal regime in which they were clearly inferior to their Christian neighbours. For a long time, they were not even considered as *vecinos* (neighbours or residents) of the Villa for all purposes and the *Fuero* (Local Statute) contained various legal aspects that were highly discriminatory, such as harsher penalties for Muslims for committing the same offences as Christians and less protection if they were the victims of crime. They were also forbidden from acting as witnesses in trial proceedings except in disputes between Muslims or in very exceptional cases. They also had to live apart, at least in theory, and were unable to hold certain positions or perform certain trades. In some periods, they were obliged to dress in a particular way and to pay higher taxes. In practice, however, many of these measures were not enforced in Madrid at least until King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella (known in Spanish history as the Catholic Monarchs) decided to bring an end to the diversity in their kingdoms.

Although in theory, Muslims were governed by their own specific legal regime, in practice they were often subject to general common law. This led to ridiculous situations such as when the Church of Toledo excommunicated a Muslim from Getafe called Abdalla for not paying his debts in 1488, something quite absurd given that non-Catholics cannot be excommunicated. In the same way

in 1481 the Council decided that Jews and Muslims had to take part in the procession to mark the day of Corpus Christi, ordering “that on that day the Moors bring out their games and dances and the Jews their dance”.³¹ This was probably to include them within the representation of evil and sin that was normally part of the procession (which was led by a huge monster called the *Tarasca* and all kinds of grotesque characters), although it was also perhaps a way of integrating them into the traditional ceremonies of the people of Madrid.

What did the Muslims of Madrid do? Most had similar trades to their Christian neighbours: shopkeepers, innkeepers, shearmen, shoemakers, the odd weaver, etc. There was also a better-off group, a sort of middle class made up of people from the metalworking sector, and especially blacksmiths, a trade in which the Mudejares had something of a monopoly, although there were also cutlers and makers of pots and pans. In Madrid there are records of fifteen Muslim metal workers: Mahomad, a blacksmith, Hamad de Cubas, Hamad de Griñón, Ali Paladinas, Mahomad Toledano... blacksmiths; Yuça and Mahomad, pot makers; Ali and Diego, cutlers, etc. and finally above all these others, there was a small group of families who made up the social and economic elite and who normally acted as the leaders of the *aljama*. This group had very close links with the building trade and in particular with the profession of *alarife* (from the Arabic *al-arif*: “the expert”) or master builder, to such an extent that the semi-official post of Master Builder of the Council was almost exclusively given to Muslims. These master builders were quite important in Madrid society above



Mudejar entrance into the Torre de los Lujanes. 15th century. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

all from the second half of the 15th century onwards, when Madrid began to grow and new areas were developed, the main streets were widened and paved, and new squares were created —such as the Plaza del Arrabal, which later became the Plaza Mayor— and other public infrastructures. The master builders played a very important role in this process and this must undoubtedly have brought them economic power and some capacity to intervene in politics in spite of the barrier of their religion. One example of this influence was that in 1480 when the measures against Jews and Muslims were intensified right across Castile, the Council of Madrid mitigated their effects on local Muslims.



The Hospital of La Latina in around 1857. It was constructed in 1499 and the master builder in charge, Master Haçan, converted to Christianity three years later [Photo: Charles Clifford]

The *alcalde* of the *aljama* sometimes also held the post of Master Builder of the Council, as was the case with Master Abraen of San Salvador, who had inherited this position from his father, Abdallá, on his death in 1478. Two years later Mahomad de Gormaz was appointed, and on his death in 1490 his succession was disputed in court by the brothers Abraen and Yuçaf de Gormaz. Mahomad and Abraen were responsible for most of the numerous public works carried out at the end of the 15th century. The work of the Master Builder of the Council also involved the technical inspection and assessment of the construction and maintenance of public works, declarations of buildings in ruins, the adjudication of building plots and even issuing rulings in lawsuits involving building or planning questions. Their rulings were purely for consultation purposes and were not binding, but this does not mean that the post of Master Builder was not, at least to some

extent, a public office, apparently the only one occupied by Muslims. These master builders also had their own private businesses with the advantage that their public position gave them a head start over the competition when it came to obtaining public works contracts. It seems that the “revolving doors” between the public and private sectors worked just as well then as they do today.

The numerous public works conducted by Muslim master builders included for example the slaughterhouses, in the old Casa de la Carnicería (House of the Butcher) in the Plaza Mayor, and the repair of the old bridges of Segovia (known as La Puente Segoviana, further south than the present-day bridge), Toledo and Viveros over the River Jarama. They also built the houses of the Rastro —the first fixed retail installation in what is today a famous market— and they worked on churches and numerous private houses.

At this stage perhaps we should digress a little to talk about Mudejar art, a hybrid style between the Andalusian and Christian (Romanesque, Gothic) decorative and architectural techniques of the same period which became a symbol of the cultural mix of the Middle Ages. It is widely believed that Mudejar art was specific to the Mudejares,



The tower of the Church of San Pedro el Viejo, from the 14th century is one of various examples of Mudejar architecture in Madrid. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]



Mudejar arch in the Casa de los Lujanes. 15th century.
[Photo: Javier Sánchez]

in other words the Muslim minority, but this was not the case. Buildings in Mudejar style were not necessarily the work of Muslims, and the Muslim master builders, bricklayers, plasterers and carpenters were also perfectly familiar with and happy to use the other styles in vogue at the time, in accordance with the client's wishes. These were shared artistic and architectural languages which were not the exclusive preserve of any one community. The clearest example of this is that the Muslim master builder, Master Haçan, built one of the most important Gothic buildings of the period: the hospital of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, better known as the Hospital de la Latina, after which this part of the city is still known in spite of it being knocked down in 1904. The decorative gate or entrance to the hospital can still be seen today in the Madrid Architecture School.

Mudejar art therefore, rather than a style developed directly by Muslims, was more an expression of a generalized cultural hybridization in the different societies in the Iberian Peninsula at the time. The Muslims were not the only ones to adapt to the surrounding cultural environment, as the dominant Christian society also accepted, consciously or unconsciously, numerous other Andalusian cultural uses. Two very interesting

examples of Mudejar buildings can be found in the historic quarter of Madrid: the Parish Church of San Nicolás de los Servitas and the tower of San Pedro el Viejo. The bell-tower of San Nicolás has such a markedly “Islamic” look that although it dates from the twelfth century—it is the oldest building still in use in Madrid— some authors have claimed that it was originally a minaret from a mosque built in the last years of the Andalusian era. The tower of San Pedro, by contrast, is in a much more austere style, broken only by some small pointed horseshoe arches. This church dates from the 13th or 14th century and there is a historiographic tradition that it was originally the mosque of the *Morería* or Moorish Quarter, although as we will go on to see this was situated next to the sharp drop verging onto the Calle Segovia. Unless of course the *Morería* was situated in more than one place over the course of the centuries.

Other Mudejar features, in addition to these two towers, include the pointed arches in the Casa de los Lujanes, a noble house in the Plaza de la Villa. One of these arches acted as what appeared to be a secondary entrance to the house (the main portal is in Renaissance style) and the other was an entrance to the tower from a side alley. Outside the historic centre of Madrid, there is also the 13th century country chapel of Santa María la Antigua, which stands next to the former site of Carabanchel prison and very near the cemetery. This is the best conserved example of Mudejar architecture in the Madrid Region, as it has survived the centuries with almost all its original features intact.



Mudejar arches from the tower of the 12th century Church of San Nicolás. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

Master Haçan's involvement in the hospital commissioned by Beatriz Galindo, *la Latina*, the private tutor to the children of the Catholic Monarchs, is a sign that the Muslim elite not only had good relations with the Council, but also with the monarchy and the Church. In 1454 King John II referred to "Master Yuça of Segovia, the master builder of my *alcaçares* of the Villa of Madrid".³² This Master Yuça or Yuçafe must have died around 1470 and his son, who died in about 1482, worked for the Catholic Monarchs as a carpenter and master of building works at the Palaces and was *alcalde* (mayor) of the Madrid *aljama* or assembly, and in theory of the *aljama* of Segovia too, although they never recognized him as such. There are also records of a painter called Yuça, who worked in the Church of San Andrés by order of Queen Isabella I, and of a famous master builder called Yuçaf Orejudo (Yucaf Big Ears), who was responsible for building the Archbishops' houses in nearby Alcalá de Henares. Even when forced conversion to Christianity, the highest degree of legal violence ever wreaked on the Mudejares, was imposed, there are records of noble and even



Mudejar arch framed by an alfiz from the tower of the Church of San Pedro el Viejo. 14th century. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

royal Christians acting as godparents in the baptisms of various members of the Mudejar elite. In at least one case, the future Queen Joanna of Castile, at that time still a princess, and her husband Philip of Habsburg acted as godparents, as we will later go on to see.

In order to conclude this portrait of the Muslim elite in Madrid, we should perhaps turn our attention to Yuçaf Mellado, who was one of the richest, best-known members of the community. Mellado played an important role in politics as a supporter of the pretender Juana la Beltraneja against Isabella in the war of Castilian succession, which is why all his assets were seized by the Royal Council in 1476 and granted to the poet Juan Álvarez Gato, who was also the head of the Royal Household of the victorious Queen Isabella. Álvarez Gato has a street named after him in Madrid, which was originally known as the Callejón del Gato, and was home to the mutating mirrors to which the Spanish writer Ramón María del Valle-Inclán referred in his book *Luces de Bohemia*. It is widely believed that the properties that Yuçaf Mellado lost to this poet were in this area, which at that time was devoted to crops and vegetables, hence the name Calle Huertas (Street of the Vegetable Gardens). However, we have no details as to what these confiscated assets consisted of, nor indeed is there any record confirming that he actually lost them because documents from years later suggest that he was still a wealthy man.

In 1499 the Council fined Yuçaf and his son Ali for employing four Christian servants without the requisite licences, a fine that was paid by placing an embargo on a carpet for the sum of 1100 maravedis, or two servants' salaries. It is worth pointing out that the sentences do not mention the fact that the convicted persons were Mudejares, because—at least in theory—the same fines would have been imposed if the offence had been committed by a Christian. One year after the problem with the servants, he is referred to as the “*alcaide*” together with Abraen of San Salvador, who was also the *alcalde* of the *aljama* as well as enjoying a very comfortable economic position. The word *alcaide* comes from the Arabic *al-qa'id*, which means “the leader” (of troops) and which in mediaeval Castilian was used to refer to the person responsible for the defence of a fortress. Perhaps Mellado was involved in the defence of the Castle in Madrid, which was besieged and damaged by the troops of Queen Isabella during the War of Succession. After his conversion to Christianity in 1502 he was officially granted the title of “master of mending broken bones”, a lesser form of medicine, although his fortune almost certainly came from the income he received from his many properties and businesses.



The Apse of the Miracles, popularly known as the Marabout, is what remains of a 13th century Mudejar church in Talamanca de Jarama. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]



Interior of the Apse of the Miracles. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

Life in the Moorish Quarters. A mixture of tolerance and repression

When the German geographer Hieronymus Münzer visited Madrid in 1499, where he met the King and Queen, he noted that the city had “many running springs and a very good provisions market and two Moorish quarters full of Saracens”.³³ The Muslims of Madrid, as mentioned earlier, were concentrated in a part of the Parish of San Andrés that was known as the *Morería* (Moorish Quarter), a name that survives today in a street and a square. A second Moorish quarter developed later near the road to Toledo, and people distinguished between them by referring to them as the *Morería Vieja* (old Moorish quarter) and the *Morería Nueva* (new Moorish quarter).

The Morería Vieja was a relatively closed space and the separation from the predominantly Christian area was emphatically marked by a number of large buildings. These included the Palace owned

by the prominent Vargas family (according to tradition the real site of the house of St Isidore), which from the 15th century onwards was known as the Palace of the Lujanes de la Morería (after the powerful Luján family), and the immense Palace of the Lasso de Castilla family, where it is believed the Catholic Monarchs liked to stay during their visits to Madrid. When the segregation policies were intensified at the end of the 15th century, partition walls were erected to limit access to the Moorish quarter. It is interesting to note that one of the first steps taken by Philip II's architects when Madrid became his capital city was to reopen the old Moorish quarter and its communications with the rest of the city. After being walled up, the Quarter probably



Plaque for the Plaza de la Morería offering a stereotype image of Muslims from Madrid. By the tile-maker Alfredo Ruiz de Luna. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumea]

retained one main entrance at the beginning of what is today the Calle del Alamillo, which at that time was the beginning of the Calle Real de la Morería, as the Alamillo itself was a square that opened onto the gorge of San Pedro.

On the south-west side of the quarter was the so-called Gate of the Moors, which led to the cemetery which was situated outside the walls in accordance with Muslim tradition. The name of the gate is remembered today in a square named after it (Plaza de Puerta de Moros) next to the Plaza de los Carros, although the gate itself probably disappeared in the second half of the 16th century. There are also reports from this time of the Muslim cemetery situated near the Plaza de la Cebada, because the Hospital of La Latina insistently requested and finally ensured that the land containing the cemetery be granted to it after the Mudejares were obliged to convert.

A second Muslim quarter appeared in the mid-15th century at the beginning of the road to Toledo, to the south-west of the Plaza del Arrabal, now known as the Plaza Mayor, which was quickly becoming the commercial centre of the Villa. This quarter became known as the *Morería Nueva* and the taxes levied on its houses were three times as high as in the *Morería Vieja*, a sign that they were of better quality and of the higher social and economic standing of its inhabitants. The existence of the two Moorish quarters does not imply that every single Muslim in Madrid lived in one or the other. A document from 1382, for example refers to the sale of houses in the Calle Real de la Almudena, right in the centre of the Villa, to an innkeeper called Abdalla, and a provision issued by Queen Isabella in 1477 stated that a Master Mahomad was living in a rented house owned by the wife of Pedro de Luján, perhaps one of the Casas de los Lujanes in the Plaza de la Villa, given that Mahomad was one of the most prominent members of the *aljama*. Although the courts of Castile and other authorities had ordered on various occasions that Muslims must live in segregated areas, in Madrid these measures were only partially enforced, at least until the discriminatory measures against them were intensified at the end of the 15th century.

The Catholic Monarchs came to the throne on the back of the same anti-Muslim discourse that Isabella's supporters had used in the War of Succession in which in order to insult Joanna, the legitimate successor to King Henry IV, they had accused her "even in the way she dressed and walked, her food and her habit of reclining at the table, as well as in other secret, more indecent excesses, of preferring the customs of the followers of Muhammad to those of the Christian religion".³⁴

As soon as she came to power, Queen Isabella decided to make life impossible for the Muslims and Jews, as a first step towards the annihilation of their religions and the Europeanisation of their customs. To this end, she updated and reinforced the laws of discrimination and segregation that had been introduced over the long course of the Middle Ages but until then had had few practical effects.

Under the aegis of the new King and Queen, the Courts of Madrigal of 1476 and of Toledo of 1480 ordered that a system of *apartamiento* (the modern word would be *apartheid*) be applied to Jews and Muslims. This involved the obligation to wear signs sewn into their clothes that would identify them as such (which also sounds familiar), and they were forbidden from performing certain trades, buying certain properties, wearing rich vestments, keeping Christian servants and holding public offices that would give them jurisdiction over Christians. All of these provisions were confirmed soon afterwards by a papal bull from Pope Sixtus IV:

Due to the continuous mixed conversation and dwelling of the Jews and the Moors with the Christians, great damage and trouble is being caused and the said high officials have requested us on this issue that we order to provide, order and command that all the Jews and Moors in all and any of the cities and towns and places of our Kingdoms [...] shall have their different Jewish and Moorish Quarters, which must be separate from one another, and they must not dwell together with Christians or in a neighbourhood with them.³⁵

These laws began to be applied in Madrid from 5th July 1481, when the Council, assisted by the Royal Inspector Juan Ramírez de Guzmán, created a commission to organize the apartheid of Muslims and Jews, forcing them to sell any properties they still owned outside the quarters in which they were now confined, and obliging Christians to do the same with any properties they owned inside them. It was also ordered that the quarter be physically sealed off via the construction of walls:

Their Lords organized and marked out the places where the Moors and Jews would live apart where they now live and dwell, and will continue to live and dwell in this Villa: for the Jews, the place where they have the synagogue, and for the Moors where they have their *almagil*; and they appointed the following people so that together with the inspector, Mr Joan Ramírez de Guzmán, they could examine where to close off the streets so that these Jews and Moors could be placed apart.³⁶

The place chosen for confining the Mudejars was the *Morería Vieja*, which is where the *almagil* (from the Arabic *al-masjid*) or mosque stood. The Muslims had to pay for the construction of the walls that would confine them. This was not the case for the Jews, whose walls measuring “two panels of rammed earth” (about 3 metres high) would be paid for by the Council as the Jews were “very poor and miserable”. As regards the *Morería Nueva*, it seems that its inhabitants continued to live there, perhaps due to lax application of these orders or more likely because it was also walled off in some way.

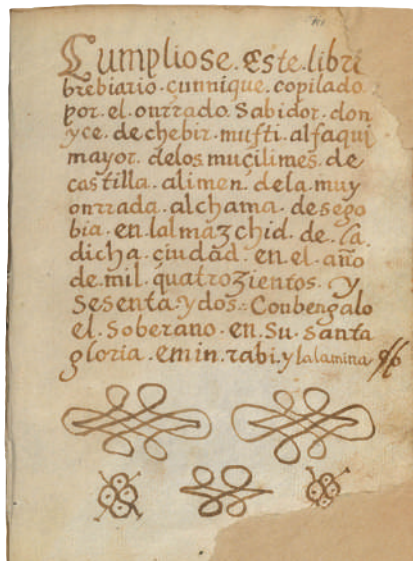
Although the segregation of housing had negative effects, that of shops and businesses was even more serious. The fact is that most Mudejares already lived in the *morerías* before these new laws were enforced, the problem was that a lot of them had workshops and shops in other parts of the Villa. In the Plaza del Arrabal there were various forges and other businesses run by Mudejares, and the blacksmiths were amongst the most vociferous in the protests against this measure. Their important role in this sector, together with the professional and family alliances that many of them had formed with the well-positioned group of master builders, enabled them to carry out what was perhaps the first known strike in the history of Madrid, which lasted more than half a year.

At the end of 1481, when the real effects of segregation began to be noted, the blacksmiths downed tools and stubbornly refused to change their minds. This obliged the Council on 26th of April 1482, to present a “petition to their Lords the King and Queen in favour of the Moors, so that they may tend their shops during the day only in the squares of this Villa”. The King and Queen did not answer and on



Seal of the Council of Madrid, showing the female bear that symbolizes the city. Museo de San Isidro. [Photo: MSI]

29th May the Council threatened Hamad de Cubas and Hamad de Griñón, as the representatives of the Muslim blacksmiths with a fine of 10,000 maravedis, if within one day they had not set up forges in their houses in the *Morería* and had not immediately attended to the needs of the farmers who needed “their ploughshares, hoes and other things mended”.³⁷ The Council also specified that the fine would be used to pay the costs of the Bridge of Toledo. However, the Muslims stalwartly refused to give in and continued their head to head with the Crown until finally on the 26th July 1482 it was the Crown that caved in and allowed them —and by extension the Jews— “to keep their shops selling wares and their trades in these squares just as they always had, providing that the shops are small and are not houses to be dwelt in, nor for eating in and they must not remain in them at night”.³⁸



Colophon from the Sunni Breviary of Yçe de Chebir, *alimén* (imam) of the Mudejar aljama (assembly) of Segovia, 1462.

In the years that followed, the Council made various applications on behalf of Muslims that they be allowed not only to keep their shops in the *arrabal* area but also to live in them, and in the year 1500 the authorities granted a number of permits to this end without even asking for Royal permission. The Muslims, just like the Jews, were forbidden to work in certain trades or professions or to hold public positions, although as we have seen these prohibitions were only applied in part. These vetoes also extended to fields such as food and medicine. However there was a time for example when the surgeon to the Council was a Jew, don Çulema, and as we saw earlier Yuçaf Mellado was appointed a “master of mending broken bones”, and although his position within this profession was not officially “legalized” until he converted to Christianity, it seems certain that he would

have been practising long before then. As regards food, it seems that the main problem lay in the butchers' shops, perhaps because the way the animals were slaughtered and the meat was processed had important religious connotations for both Jews and Muslims due to their respective rules on *kosher* and *halal* foods. As far back as the *Fuero de Madrid*, Muslims were prohibited from selling meat to Christians, and at the end of the 15th century fines of 60 and later 300 maravedis were established for any butcher who broke these rules, which would suggest that they were not strictly complied with. In the case of other food products, the rules were flouted even more often, so much so that in 1492 the Crown had to call the Council to order.

There were other laws that forbade certain relations between Muslims and Christians. Needless to say, marriage and sexual relations were completely forbidden and were punishable with the death penalty. Other prohibitions included eating and drinking together, that Christian babies could have Muslim midwives and vice versa and attendance at weddings, funerals and other events with religious content, although as we saw earlier there was the unusual obligation, under threat of fine, for Jews and Muslims not only to attend but also to actively participate in the procession of Corpus Christi. These measures, which sought to prevent any physical contact and therefore religious contagion of Christians, raised an obvious question: How could you tell if someone was Christian, Muslim or Jewish just by looking at them? The answer was you couldn't. They were impossible to distinguish. Over the years a wide range of measures were introduced to make Muslims and Jews more easily recognizable, precisely because they looked so similar to Christians. In 1462, the legal scholar from Segovia, Yçe de Chebir, wrote his famous compilation of Islamic law in Castilian Spanish because virtually none of his fellow Muslims could read Arabic. This did not mean that Arabic was never used in the Kingdom of Castile. In some parts, such as the Murcia region or the extraordinary case of Hornachos in Badajoz, colloquial Arabic could still be heard, but the vast majority of Mudejares in Castile and Aragon in the 15th century no longer spoke Arabic as their mother tongue, as was the case in Madrid.

In order to create differences which in reality either did not exist or were very subtle, the laws insisted again and again that members of the minority groups should have a distinguishable external appearance. As in other cases, the fact that such insistence was required suggests that these rules were not complied with or at least not in full. In 1478 the Crown authorities ordered that the penalties "against Jews and Moors who walk around without their signs"³⁹ be enforced, an

order that perhaps proved ineffective because in 1487 the Council again ruled that Muslim men must wear closed capes of yellowish green, and that both men and women should wear a clearly visible half-moon sewn into their clothes, under threat of fine. At the end of the 15th century, the restrictive measures that forbade Muslims from using specific adornments and fabrics such as silk, embroidery, vivid colours and valuable garments were also repeated.

Muslim community life was organized around certain institutions and buildings. The centre of community life was the Mosque, which was not of course the Great Mosque of yore but a much more modest building situated in the *Morería Vieja*. We know more or less where it was located due to the fact that in 1561 Gaspar Dávila, a council scribe, bought a piece of land “where once stood the mosque of the Moors and today it is fallen, which was sited at the top of the Pozacho

in the Parish of Sant Andrés”.⁴⁰ In other words the mosque was almost certainly situated at the end of the Calle Real de la Morería, where the houses came to an end at the edge of the steep drop which today leads down to the Calle Segovia and in those days was called “el Pozacho”. The space occupied by this mosque was much smaller than the lost Great Mosque of Islamic Madrid, and may not even have had a central courtyard. For ablutions purposes there was the fountain of the Caños Viejos. In addition to daily prayers, the mosque was also a place where the community came together on Fridays to listen to the *khutbah* or sermon, which would have been delivered in Castilian even though the prayers themselves were offered in Arabic. In the mosque too, the children would have received some basic instruction, above all in essential aspects of their religion (surahs from the Quran, ritual practices,



The Mudejars of Castile were not substantially different in appearance from their Christian or Jewish neighbours. The depictions on some of the street plaques in Madrid today are stereotypical images that have little to do with their real appearance. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

prophetic traditions, rules of behaviour, a basic grasp of Arabic for use in prayers). It also seems likely that the traditional Muslim call to prayer would have been heard. Although it had been prohibited at the beginning of the 14th century by Pope Clement V, it seems that this rule, like many others, was not actually enforced in the Spanish kingdoms or at least not very strictly.

They also had an unusual building known as the “wedding house”, where marriages within the community were held. These were very important events as a sign of belonging to a cultural tradition that was becoming weaker and weaker. Marriage was one of the rituals in which these Castilian Muslims most closely observed the formal aspects of Islamic and Andalusian rites, or what remained of them. The ceremonies to celebrate the circumcision of boys must have played a similar albeit less important role. Many of these events would have been attended by Christian guests (something which was also repeatedly prohibited), especially when the families involved were members of the well-connected elite of the Muslim community.

The *Morería Vieja* had a butcher’s shop which belonged to the assembly or *aljama*, where they sold *halal* meat that had been prepared in accordance with Islamic rules on food, which forbade the eating of pork or of animals from which the blood not been correctly drained and established a particular ritual for their slaughter. It seems that it was quite common, and not only in Madrid, for Christians to ignore the rule forbidding them from buying meat from Muslim butchers, who were cheaper and apparently offered better quality. Indeed, the very same rules prohibiting Christians from buying meat from Muslims allowed them to do so if they could not get decent meat from Christian butchers.

Finally, we should mention the apparently short-lived bathhouse. After the conquest, the institution of the *hammam* or Islamic public bath was initially maintained by the Christian kings, who effectively expropriated them and ran them as a monopoly. On many occasions they would redesign them or even build them anew as they were highly profitable businesses. In 1263 Alfonso X ceded the old baths to the Council, ordering that they be refurbished and opened for business once again as in the times of Alfonso VIII and Fernando III, using the income that they generated for the repair of the city walls and other public works. By the end of the following century in 1399, the baths were once again in ruinous condition, this time for ever. The last person charged with running them had for a long time been “a Moorish lady who is known as Doña Xançi who rented them from the

Council every year for five hundred or six hundred maravedis”.⁴¹ Doña Xançi —Lady Sun, *Shams* in Arabic— is the only female member of the Muslim minority about whom there is documentary evidence of her occupation.

The exact location of the baths is disputed. Jerónimo de Quintana said that they were “near the fountain that we now call Cañosviejos, once the site of the vegetable gardens of El Pozacho, because of the many wells and water that were in them”,⁴² in other words in the Moorish Quarter, where even today there is a street called Caños Viejos and a fountain at the bottom of the staircase beneath the Viaduct. However, the document from 1399 that we mentioned in the previous paragraph, a witness declaration that the old baths had belonged to the Council, suggests that they were in

the Parish of San Pedro, further towards the area known as Puerta Cerrada, and therefore outside the *Morería*. In any case the baths were not only frequented by Muslims but also by Christians and Jews, with different bathing times for men and women. However, in the mid-14th century a rumour began to spread that these establishments were a source of all kinds of vice and disease and that they would steal men’s virility and destroy their warrior spirit, and their popularity waned drastically. Despite this, baths could still be found over the next two centuries in places with large Muslim communities until in the mid-16th century it was decided that their continued use would reinforce Islamic customs and beliefs, which by then were illegal, and the baths were outlawed. The early disappearance of the baths in Madrid could possibly be interpreted as a sign of the cultural adaptation of the Muslims to Christian customs.

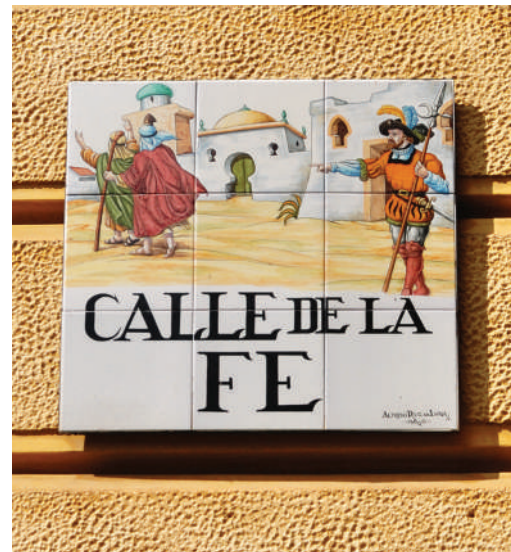


The Old Morería as seen on the map by Texeira (1656). We have highlighted the Fountain of Caños Viejos, the Casa del Pastor (once the bath-house) and the possible site of the Mosque of the Morería, at the end of the quarter, facing south-east. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeya]

The last Andalusians

In many ways the Muslim community had to swim against opposing currents: on the one hand remaining faithful to a cultural tradition that although increasingly diffuse was reinforced by intermarriage and everyday life within the community, and on the other assimilation into the dominant Christian culture, something that occurred inevitably with the passage of time at least in certain aspects (language, customs ...). It is therefore not surprising that some Muslims chose to convert to Christianity quite some time before it actually became obligatory. For example, in 1494 a woman from Guadalajara called María Álvarez brought a legal action against Ali de Ayllón, a Mudejar from Madrid, regarding his ownership of some houses that he had inherited as part of the estate of his father Hamed Pexias. She argued that Ali could not inherit from his father because he had converted to the Christian faith, in accordance with the provisions of the *Leyes de moros* (Laws governing Moors): “the Moor shall not inherit from the Christian nor the Christian from the Moor”.⁴³ There are also reports of Madrid Muslims forming part of the “Moorish Guard” of the Kings of Castile, a mercenary corps used by King John II and King Henry IV. The members of this corps normally ended up converting to Christianity or if not received important positions within the *aljama*. A case in point was the Master Lope, son of the Master Yuça, who in 1457 was referred to as a Moorish knight.

The obligation to convert to Christianity became law in 1502, but the possibility of this happening must have been on the cards



Plaque marking the Calle de la Fe, in the Lavapiés district, picturing a Christian soldier ordering some “Moors” to move on. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]

for some time. In 1494, the Royal authorities had to ask the Governor of Madrid to act “so that the Moors in this Villa are not told that they must be ejected from these kingdoms”,⁴⁴ which shows that the discriminatory measures associated with the war and the conquest of Granada had created a climate of religious intolerance which augured the imminent end of centuries of coexistence. The story of the surrender of Granada is well-known: on 25th November 1491, the Catholic Monarchs

reached an agreement with Muhammad XII (also known as Abu Abd Allah, or *Boabdil* in Spanish) for the surrender of the Kingdom of Granada. This agreement, which came into force on the 2nd January 1492, contained a series of conditions that guaranteed the continued free practice of the Muslim religion and safeguarded the culture, institutions and way of life of the people of Granada.

This surrender agreement was soon not worth the paper it was written on, as the new Christian authorities launched a campaign of religious and cultural harassment against the inhabitants of Granada, so causing the outbreak of a serious of rebellions. These provided the excuse for the forced conversion of the Muslims of Granada, the transformation of their mosques into churches and the destruction of all things that might possibly involve some form of contamination by Islam such as books. It is perhaps worth mentioning in passing the curious paradox that one of the prime movers behind this destruction, Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, is today remembered for his work in favour of



Mudejar-inspired decorative ceiling. 16th century. Great Hall of the University of Alcalá. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

culture and for being the founder of the Complutense University. These anti-Islamic laws were soon extended to the rest of the Muslims in the Kingdom of Castile. The law of forced conversion of 12 February 1502 (known as the *Pragmatic sanction*) allowed them to choose between baptism or exile, the same choice given to the Jews ten years earlier, except that in practice there were so many obstacles standing in the way of exile that the majority had no choice but to stay. The Crown of Aragon took similar steps in 1525. The Muslims who were baptized were known from then on as “new Christians of Moor” or “Moriscos”.

In Madrid, the Council decided to reward those Muslims who opted to convert before being obliged to do so by decree, so as to provide an example for the others, and stated its willingness to do the same when the Assembly (*aljama*) agreed their conversion en masse on 21st February 1502 and requested among other things exemption from taxes for 10 years. The Madrid authorities realized that it was important to treat the Muslims well so as to ensure that they stayed in the city, due to the crucial role they played in various trades:

their Lords decided that given that the Moors that live in this Villa want to convert to our Holy Catholic Faith and have asked for exemption for 10 years from all taxes; and because this is in the service of our Lord and of their Highnesses and of the honour of our Villa, so that it should not be depopulated where there were people from the trades of builders and carpenters necessary for the good of this Villa; that they should grant them this exemption.⁴⁵

In this way the agreement reached between the assembly and the leaders of the Council was announced in the two *morerías* and in the Plaza del Arrabal, before five o'clock in the afternoon, the time until when all Muslims had to remain inside their houses. The Muslims would be baptized in exchange for being exempted from tax and from the actions of the Inquisition (which would now have jurisdiction over them as Christians) for 10 years. They would also retain ownership of the butchers, of the wedding house and of the cemetery.

In addition to these general concessions to the Muslim as a group, a number of other incentives were also offered to individual members of the *aljama*, in particular and as might be expected, to the members of the elite who had close relations with those in power. Three well-known members

of the *aljama*, Abraen of San Salvador, Yuçaf Mellado and Master Mahomad, resisted briefly and eventually converted together with their families outside the agreed time limit, in spite of which the Council rewarded them “for being honourable and hard-working members of their trades and because once they had converted, all the others who had left would return”.⁴⁶ They also enjoyed a number of special privileges: Abraen of San Salvador, who from then on would be known as Francisco Ramírez, was given a shop in the Plaza del Arrabal and continued to act as Master Builder of the Council. Yuçaf Mellado, who was to be known after his baptism as Juan Zapata, was officially recognized in his profession as a “master of mending broken bones” with a salary of 1000 maravedis. Two leaders of the *aljama* were also exempted from paying taxes to the Crown (they had already been exempted from paying tax to the Council) and were given permission “to live and dwell wherever they pleased”, which suggests that not all new Christians were allowed to leave the Moorish quarters. Perhaps for this reason, the Parish of San Andrés continued to be known for its *Morisco* population throughout the following century.

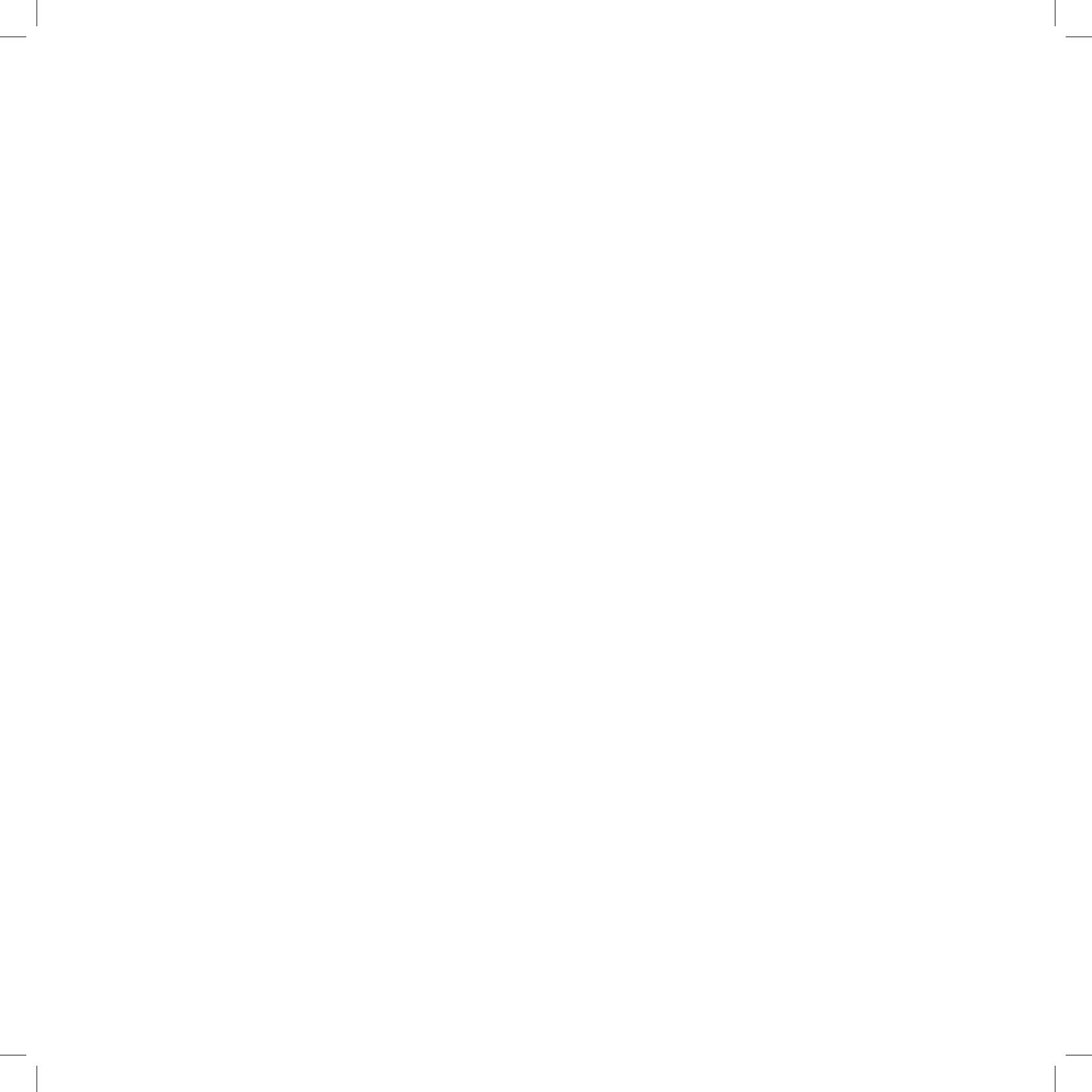
When the Mudejar elite were baptized, they generally took the names of the members of the Madrid oligarchy who acted as their godparents. Juan Zapata and Francisco Ramírez were both members of the Council and the latter was also a Royal Secretary and the husband of Beatriz Galindo. Master Haçan, the master builder of the hospital created by Beatriz Galindo, took the name of Gonzalo Fernández, in honour of the military hero Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, also known as *El Gran Capitán* (“The Great Captain”), and Master Mahomad took the name Diego Hurtado, after Cardinal Hurtado de Mendoza, who had died that year in Madrid, or perhaps after his son of the same name. Princess Joanna (*the Mad*) and her husband Prince Philip (*the Handsome*) also acted as godparents in one of these baptisms.

Changing religion was not as easy for ordinary Muslims as it was for the elite. Some decided to leave Madrid even before the agreement was signed and some left in the years immediately afterwards. Fear of the Inquisition once the moratorium of 10 years on their actions had come to an end was probably influential in these decisions. On 21st June 1514 the Council forbade them from leaving the city, “as of the newly converted, from the Moors, some have gone and many others intend to leave and say that they are going to Granada and other parts and the truth is that they say they are going overseas”, as a result of which the leaders of the Council ordered

“to announce that none of these converts should dare to absent themselves from this Villa with their house and estate, without the permission of her Highness”.⁴⁵ There is a gap in the *Books of Decisions* taken by the Council between 1504 and 1512, which are crucial years for knowing how the Morisco community in Madrid fared in the early days after the forced conversion, but the available data show that the agreement between the *aljama* and the Council leaders was breached in at least two points. As early as October 1502, Beatriz Galindo began to bring pressure to bear so that the land on which the Muslim cemetery was situated could be added to her hospital, something which she finally secured, and in 1503 we know that the tax exemptions agreed in the pact were not honoured, and that the Crown authorities had no choice but to warn the Council on this question. The fact is that from 1502 onwards, the Muslim community, which had formed part of the city ever since its foundation six and a half centuries earlier, ceased to exist at least officially. But as real life is never exactly as defined in laws or official plans, we will see that Islam continued to survive in Madrid for at least another century.

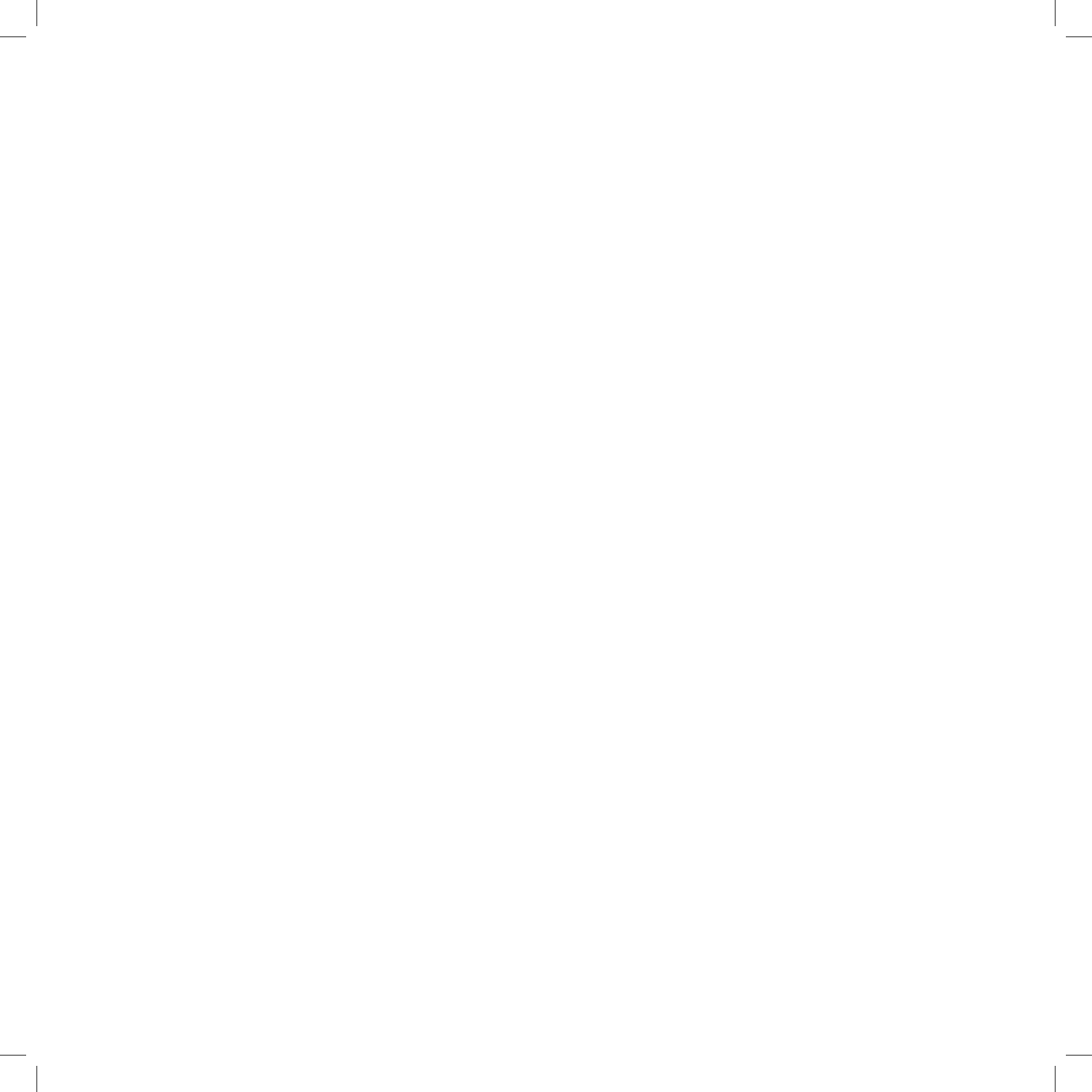


Tomb of Beatriz Galindo, 16th century. It is carved in alabaster and comes from the Convent and Hospital of La Latina, which she founded. Now at the Museo de San Isidro. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumeya]



The other Madrid of the Austrias:

Moriscos, renegades and captives



He said that the Villa of Madrid was the best in Spain because a Moor could live like a Moor, and a Lutheran like a Lutheran without anyone saying anything to them.⁴⁸

Declaration of the Morisco Daniel Conde before the Inquisition

On 15th April 1501, during their first visit to Madrid, Philip the Handsome and his wife Joanna of Trastámara acted as godparents in the baptism of “a Moor and two of his children”,⁴⁹ who had voluntarily converted to Christianity. Antoine de Laing, who was a close collaborator of Philip and the chronicler of this journey, recounts that one of the things that caused the worst, most lingering impression on his Lord and Master was “the multitude of white Moors who inhabited the Spains”,⁵⁰ and attributed to his influence and advice the fact that the Queen decided to oblige the Muslims of Castile to adopt the true faith.

Once they had been baptized, albeit by force, the *Moriscos* were placed under the tutelage and close scrutiny of the Inquisition, which although previously had not been able to persecute them because they were Muslims was now free to do so if they were not good Catholics. What could they do? Given the obstacles and expense that made exile out of the question, the only option was to accept Christian baptism while trying to maintain their faith and community links in secret. As the Mancebo de Arévalo, an anonymous Morisco writer, explained “everything is possible, under



Moriscos from Granada as portrayed by Christoph Weiditz in 1529.

good disguise, because the good doctrine cannot be forbidden by any law, no matter how inhumane it may be". This task was far from easy given that they were kept under very close watch by the authorities, who did not only focus on strictly religious aspects but also began to act against all things that in their opinion smacked of Islam, from customs to music, to food or even architecture.

The authorities were particularly fierce with the people of Granada, who were the last to be conquered and colonized and were almost completely unfamiliar with Castilian culture. They were forbidden to speak or to keep books in Arabic, to dress in the traditional way, to take baths or wash themselves excessively, to sing or play their music, to dye their hair or make henna tattoos, they were also forced to keep the doors of their houses open on days considered to be of particular importance from a religious community perspective such as Fridays, Saturdays and wedding days. In 1567, when these measures came into force, there was a huge uprising in Granada and the Alpujarras, which lasted for three years and had various repercussions in Madrid. These included the capture and enslavement of many of the rebels and their families, some of whom were forced into domestic service in the houses of rich families in Madrid. However, the decision that most upset the geographical distribution of the Moriscos was the Royal order to deport the Moriscos of Granada en masse. During the winter of 1570, they were scattered throughout Castile after long journeys on foot, so as to forcibly ensure their cultural assimilation.

The Moriscos of Madrid

The Madrid region received a large number of these Moriscos. A census of 1581 stated that there were 1487 Moriscos in Madrid, 1300 in Alcalá and 167 in Talamanca (including all those deported from Granada and the pre-existing Morisco communities of Madrid who were much more integrated into the wider society). At least 33 towns in the region had Morisco residents. Most of them lived in the towns near the rivers Guadarrama, Manzanares and Henares and above all in the fertile plains of the South East (Jarama, Tajo and Tajuña), where they continued to



The district of San Ginés as seen in the map by Texeira (1656). The Church after which the district is named is indicated with a D. Many Moriscos from Granada settled here and in the San Martín district, further north.

work the land using techniques inherited from their Andalusian ancestors. Many of them worked in travelling professions such as mule drivers, mule renters or peddlers, or in others related with travel or transport such as taverners or innkeepers. These occupations, of which there are records in Madrid, enabled a lot of Moriscos to lead quiet, discreet lives and also to act as links between the different communities. This enabled them to circulate secret underground literature called *aljamiada*, which was written in the Spanish of the time but with Arabic characters in a desperate attempt to pass on the last dying embers of Andalusian civilisation. The work by Mancebo de Arévalo referred to above belongs to this genre. In addition to these occupations, the Moriscos also worked in a number of crafts and cottage industries including one that was typical of Granada, silk, which was centred in Pastrana to the east of Madrid. Silk workers included for example the spinner Diego Hernández, from the village of Villarejo de Salvanés, who was punished by the Inquisition, and the wealthy Lázaro López, the owner of various silk dyeing shops

in Madrid. The Moriscos from Granada who did not come to Madrid as slaves settled above all in the outlying districts of San Ginés and San Martín, where there are still a number of streets — Hileras (Spinners), Bordadores (Embroiderers), Coloreros (Dye makers), Mesón de Paños (Cloth House), Bonetillo (Bonnet), Herradores (Blacksmiths) — with the names of the different trades in which they worked, above all in the textile industry.

The people of Madrid did not receive those expelled from Granada with open arms, and we are not only referring to Christian society here, but also to the local Moriscos who continued to be concentrated above all in the old *morerías* in the centre of the city, and especially in the Parish of San Andrés. In addition to their almost complete adaptation to Castilian culture and way of life, even before their conversion to Christianity, they enjoyed a social status that was considerably higher than that of the exiles from Granada, who compared to them were totally foreign in terms of language and customs. The new arrivals, who were lost, uprooted and in many cases slaves, became the focus of bigoted stereotypes and rumours that had an inevitable knock-on effect on the Castilian Moriscos who were trying to go unnoticed. The presence of these Moriscos from Granada fuelled anti-Morisco sentiment and the activity of the Inquisition. Those accused were normally poor people and their accusers were often their own “Old Christian” neighbours, sometimes their masters and on occasions other Moriscos. They might also be priests responsible for overseeing the Catholic zeal of their parishioners. This is what happened to Elena, a slave from Granada who belonged to the Count of Chinchón and who in 1570 was denounced by her confessor. The anti-Morisco propaganda helped legitimize these accusations, which were driven not only by institutionalized hostility against this minority but also by all kinds of personal rivalries and petty disputes.

Those accused in this way suffered serious consequences: they were led away to the secret prisons of the Inquisition —which in Madrid was situated near the Calle Isabel la Católica, previously known as Calle de la Inquisición, near the Plaza de Santo Domingo— and their assets were seized for the duration of the proceedings. The accused was not informed about the accusation and much less about the identity of those accusing him, but one of the phases in the investigation stage of the process involved inviting the accused to explain the reasons for which he believed he had been arrested, at which point in a state of pure terror, the accused would often accuse himself of offences

of which the inquisitors were unaware. The “torment” or torture was a normal part of the process and was legally regulated as such. If at the end of these long proceedings, the accused was found guilty, he could be “handed over to the secular arm”, in other words condemned to be burned at the stake, a sentence that was carried out by the ordinary secular justice system —hence the expression—, and which could be commuted to imprisonment, the galleys or a more merciful death by garroting. There was a famous *quemadero* or burning site in Madrid just outside the gate known as the Portillo de Fuencarral, in what is today the Glorieta de Ruiz Jiménez. In 1869, when this area was being



Demonstration held on 12th May 1869 after the discovery of remains of the Inquisition burning site “which was widely attended by the poorer classes who gathered round a platform erected for the orators [...], who enthused the listeners with their patriotic proclamations and their eloquent condemnation of fanaticism”. *El Panorama*, 30th June 1869.

developed, the workers found a thick layer of earth which was similar to black shoe polish, made up of ashes and the remains of human bones of hundreds of people that had been executed there. This find gave rise to a heated debate in the Spanish parliament about the need to pay tribute to the memory of the victims, although in the end the option “not to dig up the past” won the day, which is why no-one remembers it today. The relatives and descendants of those condemned by the Inquisition were marked for generations.

Almost all the cases brought against Moriscos from the Madrid region were heard in the court of the Holy Office of Toledo,⁵¹ given that Madrid itself did not have its own court until 1650. Most of these cases involved Moriscos from Granada, which suggests that those from Madrid were better integrated and/or more discreet. Even so, some of the *Madrileño* Moriscos also found themselves accused of crimes, as was the case of María López, from Algete, who was accused of not eating pork or drinking wine, an accusation that was also extended to other people in her town. She was also accused of shrouding the body of a deceased neighbour in a new sheet, so fulfilling her last wishes in compliance with Muslim tradition. In another case, Lorenzo de Cobeña, a blacksmith from Brunete who was married to an “Old Christian” woman, was accused of attending a meeting in which people were instructed about Ramadan and of covering up the flight of several of his relatives to North Africa, which was considered tantamount to apostasy. He was convicted of providing cover for heresy and was sentenced to one year in prison, a fairly benign sentence, almost certainly due to the fact that his wife was a Christian. The Moriscos from Granada and other places were accused of similar crimes, albeit more frequently. María de Arana, a Morisco from Granada who was living



The green cross presided over the autos da fe held by the Inquisition. According to tradition, the Plaza de la Cruz Verde owes its name to the fact that autos da fe were once held there. [Photo: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]

in Alcorcón, was tortured in 1596 for having dressed two recently deceased women in clean shirts that had even been embroidered, and of not eating the heads of hens, actions or customs that the inquisitors interpreted as signs of Islamic rituals.

Alonso de Ribera, a Morisco from Granada, who was now working as a tanner in Getafe (1603), was accused by another Morisco of learning prayers “from the sect of Muhammad”⁵² and of teaching them to others. After undergoing torture and imprisonment, Ribera managed to prove that the informant was a sworn enemy of his, which led the case to be suspended. Luis de Santa Cruz, a resident of Madrid (1609), was accused by his own sister of praying and of observing Ramadan, practices which he had acquired in his childhood in Aragon where Islamic culture was stronger. Alonso de la Guardia (1583-1584), who lived in Pinto, was unintentionally betrayed by his wife, who like him was a Morisco from Granada, but seemingly had become a convinced Christian or at least a dutiful one. She unfortunately let on to someone that her husband had reproached her for lighting candles to the Virgin Mary. Jorge de Peralta, originally from Granada, and now working as a farm labourer in Villarejo de Salvanés, was arrested in 1572 because someone heard him whisper something that sounded like “ay, Muhammad”. Worse suffering was to befall Diego Hernández, also from Granada, who was working as a silk spinner in the same village. He was subjected to a long trial with “penitence” or punishment (1572-1575) because he had overheard two Old Christians in the village of Morata de Tajuña cursing the prophet Muhammad and had rebuked them for doing so.

The Holy Office was considerably more inflexible in the case of slaves. Salvador, “a descendant of Moors and a Moor himself”, who had fought in the uprising in the Alpujarras and was now a slave of Francisco de Ayllón from Madrid, was arrested on the ridiculous accusation of having declared that “Muhammad was worthier than God and that he loved Muhammad more than God” (1571-1572). The slave defended himself by saying that “one day drinking wine they had pressed him so greatly as to whether Muhammad was good that he had said yes”,⁵³ for which he was sentenced to five years in the galleys. Isabel Soler, a young slave who was captured in Granada by John of Austria and later handed over to María de la Cueva, formerly a lady in waiting to the Queen, was accused by her mistress of having said in the heat of an argument with another slave “that the faith of the Moors was better than that of the Christians”.⁵⁴ The trial record explains that Isabel was

interrogated on the rack, where they tried —unsuccessfully because as her mistress had explained she was “very brave”— to make her confess that the words she had uttered were a strong personal conviction and not simply the product of a heated moment of anger. In view of her young age she was *only* punished by whipping and public humiliation. On occasions even children were accused. Angela de Hernández, for example, was just 10 years old when she was forced to appear before the inquisitors accused of heresy. Angela was one of the girls taken as slaves in the war of the Alpujarras and she was in the service of Joanna of Austria, the Princess of Portugal, in the Monastery of the Descalzas Reales. The monastery had been founded by Joanna, who had then retired to live there together with her maid servants and slaves. Apparently, Angela had been overheard exchanging some words in Arabic with another woman from Granada, something that would have been normal in the San Martín area where the monastery was located, given that it had a large Morisco population.

There were of course some well-placed and well-connected Moriscos such as Alonso del Castillo from Granada, an interpreter for Philip II, through whom we know of an inn, which belonged to Inés Enríquez, in which Moriscos of his status would often lodge. Another man from Granada, Miguel de Luna, was a physician and a writer of some renown in his time. There was another unusual resident of Madrid whom we will refer to by his Arabic name, Ahmad ibn Qasim al-Hajari, and his Castilian surname: Bejarano. After working as a translator for various authorities he fled to Morocco in 1599, where he worked as a secretary, translator and ambassador to the Sultans. In his memoirs, written in Arabic, he describes his time in Madrid, where he claims that there was secret teaching of Arabic, probably due to the large numbers of Moriscos from Granada and Valencia, the ones who best conserved the language. Both Luna and Bejarano have been suggested as possible sources of inspiration for Cide Hamete Benengeli, a Morisco character in Cervantes’ classic *Don Quijote*.

These three Moriscos were also related with the story of the *Libros Plúmbeos* or Lead Books of Granada, a forgery with which the Moriscos of Granada made a last-ditch attempt to save the use of Arabic and to defend the unorthodox Christianity of their fellow Moriscos. The story involved the apparently chance discovery of a set of metal plates that contained texts written in what was identified as an archaic form of Arabic. These texts contained a gospel attributed to Saint Caecilius



Moriscos from Granada portrayed by Christoph Weiditz in 1529. One of the first measures of cultural repression against them was to prohibit their zambras, evenings of music and dance.

of Elvira, a legendary 1st Century saint from Granada, whose relics also appeared at the same time. The aim of the Gospel, which was written in Arabic and offered a view of the life of Jesus that was similar to that offered by Islam (in which Christ is regarded as a prophet and not as the son of God), was firstly to legitimize the use of Arabic, by disassociating it from Islam from both a historical and a religious point of view and secondly to normalize the syncretic Christianity of the Moriscos of Granada. In exchange, they offered the Church “proof” of the existence of Saint Caecilius in the form of his relics, no less. Alonso del Castillo, Miguel Luna and Bejarano were amongst the experts who certified the authenticity of the *Libros Plúmbeos*, and today it is thought that they were also probably its authors. As this plot would appear to have first been hatched in 1588, just after Alonso del Castillo’s time at Court, we could perhaps speculate that this happened in or around the inn owned by Inés Enríquez.

The fact that Madrid had so many inns, like the one owned by Inés Enríquez, was a sign of the exponential growth that the city underwent during the time of the Austrias. They offered a way of absorbing the enormous numbers of people attracted to the new capital city of the Spanish Empire and whose number included some who were very keen to conceal themselves and to blend in with the crowd, even if that meant living inside the lion’s den, in the very seat of power. Daniel Conde, a Morisco from Aragon, declared before the Inquisition in 1610 that “the Villa of Madrid was the best in Spain because a Moor could live like a Moor, and a Lutheran like a Lutheran without anyone saying anything to them”.⁵⁵ The district known as las Cavas, near the Plaza de los Carros and the Parish of San Andrés —where most of the *madrileño* Moriscos were still concentrated —, was one of the entrances to Madrid and some of its oldest inns still survive there today. The outlying districts of San Martín and San Ginés —where many of the Moriscos deported from Granada decided to settle— and the more diverse, artistic district of San Sebastián, today known as the *Barrio de las Letras* (Writers’ District) must have housed most of that *other* Madrid of the Austrias that did not conform to the established code.



Lady from Castile with slave and servant, as depicted by Christoph Weiditz in 1529. The chapines or platform shoes worn by the lady were a fashion of Andalusian origin: women from Granada used them so as to avoid getting their feet wet in the bath-houses and the Castilian ladies adopted them as a symbol of their status, making them look taller and more important.

Slavery in Madrid

The Inquisition also classified as Moriscos the Muslim slaves (Africans or Turks) who had converted to Christianity. Slavery in Spain has largely been forgotten, perhaps due to the romantic idealization of the *Siglo de Oro* or Golden Century, despite the fact that it repeatedly crops up in the literature of the time. Slavery was not confined to the relatives of the rebels from Granada —most of whom were children and young people— it also included slaves from the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea, who were unloaded off the slave ships in the large slave ports of Seville or Lisbon, before continuing their journey on to the Americas. There were also people from the Maghreb and Turks who had been captured in battle or more frequently in raids by “Corsairs”, a form of legalized piracy along the coasts of North Africa, whose main objective and booty was people. There were also, albeit to a lesser extent, natives from the Americas and from the Canary Islands and even from the Portuguese colonies in India. In any case, if we add together the slaves from Granada, those who were referred to as *moros*, *berberiscos* or *alárabes*, those described as Turks (who sometimes came from the European regions of the Ottoman Empire: the Balkans, Greece, etc.), and most of those referred to as “Africans”, it is clear that the Muslim slaves and the slaves of Muslim origin were by far the biggest group in Madrid.

Sometimes the slaves arrived together with relatives or fellow countrymen who had been captured at the same time and were later separated from them after the successive sales and resales to which they were subjected. This was the case for example of Fatiha and Sibila, a mother and daughter of forty and nine years of age respectively, who were originally from Bosnia and were slaves of the Duke of Osuna, and resident in the district of San Martín at the end of the 17th century. The archives also mention a father, Hosein, but we know nothing more about him. Another case involved two sisters from Belgrade who were baptized with similar names, Catalina Isabel and Catalina Bernarda de San José, and worked as slaves in the Parish of San Sebastián (today the Huertas district) in 1693. There are other cases. Slaves rarely had families, although they were allowed to marry and have children. There were various reasons for this, firstly because most of them were children and young people, many of whom died during adolescence or early adulthood, and secondly, because life as a slave did not encourage them to start a family, given that slave status was passed on from mothers to children and that children could be separated from their parents.

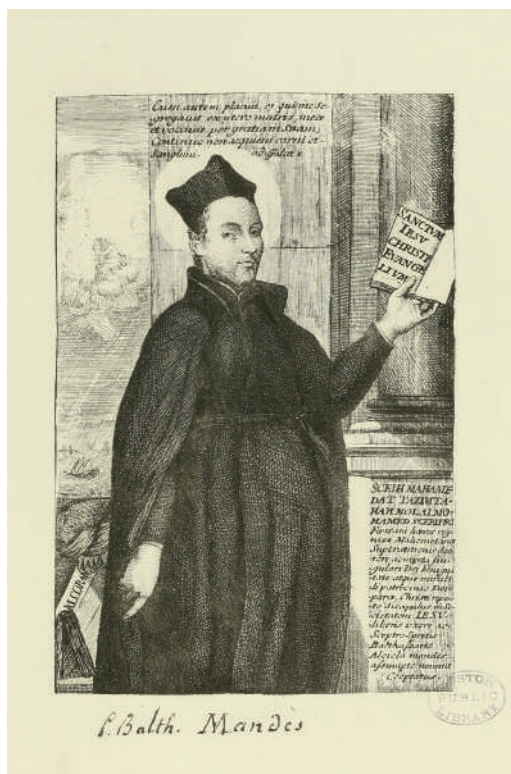
What did the slaves look like? Documents from that time mention various colours —“white”, “black”, “quince-coloured”, “tanned”, etc.— although by then racism as it was later understood was not yet fully formed and slave status, and social standing in general, was not yet associated with the colour of one’s skin, and was much more influenced by religious background. Maghrebien men often retained the traditional hairstyle of their homeland, with one or more isolated locks of hair on a shaven scalp. In addition, slaves were often branded with marks burnt into their faces, bearing the name or the coat of arms of their owners and sometimes even the address, or an S and an I in the shape of a *clavo* or nail, which stood for *sine iure* (without rights). This was popularly read as “es clavo”, which was almost the same as “esclavo” or slave. One example was a slave “the colour of stewed quince” called Juan Romero, who had “a nail in the gap between his eyebrows”.⁵⁶ They also bore the marks of the mutilations and other violent harm that had been wreaked upon them, especially when they tried to escape as was the case of a slave owned by the Marquis of Carpio, who “as he had tried to flee, had had his ear cut off and had been locked in many iron chains”,⁵⁷ wrote the poet and diplomat Lodewijk Huygens in January 1661. One of the punishments reserved for slaves was the *pringamiento* or fat shower, which involved throwing boiling fat on the wounds that had previously been opened by whipping. This may well have been the origin of the Spanish expression *ser un pringado* (to be a loser or sucker).

Slavery in Madrid was not so much a product of the need for cheap or free labour (as the city was already attracting large numbers of people from many different places in search of work) and was more due to the fact that the ownership of slaves was associated with social prestige and was therefore essential now that Madrid was the seat of the Court. The nobility and the senior clergy, the knights and the wealthiest commoners were all keen to own these luxury articles, who in legal terms had a similar status to beasts of burden. Some institutions also kept slaves. These included for example the Hospital of Antón Martín, in which a Turkish slave called Juan Bautista was employed, or religious orders and convents. The instructions issued in the 17th century for the census of the houses and inhabitants of Madrid required the owner or tenant of each house to declare, in addition to his profession, marital status and the family members and servants who lived with him, “all those male and female slaves, their names and ages, their duties, and those who are Christians, and those who are not”.⁵⁸ There were another group of slaves known as Slaves of the King, who toiled in public works (such as the road from Madrid-Segovia, now in the 18th century, which replaced

the *Balat Humayd*) or served in the galleys. There was also an additional third category, known as *esclavos cortados* or “cut slaves”, who had a certain degree of independence, sometimes working as servants in the houses of other people who paid rent to their owners.

With the exception of the Moriscos from Granada, who were officially considered as Christians, the slaves were not necessarily baptized. There were various regulations that prohibited the presence of non-baptised slaves in Madrid, or limited their movements, although they were not always enforced, hence the repeated “reissue” of these laws. For some slaveowners, baptizing a slave was a meritorious action and to some extent a way of justifying their slavery, as it enabled them to save a soul that would otherwise have been condemned to hell. On the other hand, keeping a Christian in slavery was against Catholic doctrine. In addition, “Moorish” and “Turkish” slaves were viewed with certain suspicion in society, not only because of their religion but also because they were considered responsible for all kinds of crimes, outrages and spells. If they spoke their mother tongues —often Arabic or Berber— this aroused great unease, as can be seen from an ordinance issued in 1695 entitled *Warnings for the remedy of many of the disorders that there are in this Court*, which ordered that non-baptized slaves must be buried after midnight, in secret, outside Madrid and in a deep hole, as if they were evil creatures.

From time to time mass conversion campaigns were organized, such as the one in 1670 initiated by the Jesuits with great pomp and circumstance but with little success. Less than fifty people attended the sermons, even though the priests had been helped by a convert from Tunisia, who had preached to his former fellow Muslims in Arabic. In the end only ten agreed to change their religion. The baptism took place on 25th May, the day of Pentecost, and was a show in which the whole city took part, to the extent that the Professed House of the Jesuits in Plaza de Herradores, was so overcrowded that the Royal Guard had to intervene to contain the avalanche of people. From there they marched out in procession to the church of the Imperial College of the Society of Jesus (today the Instituto de San Isidro), which in those days was considered a Cathedral. The procession was led by students of the college and was accompanied by clarions and flutes. These were followed by 15 boys in fancy attire who solemnly carried the liturgical instruments. These were followed by the *Moors*, accompanied by their godparents and flanked by the *crème de la crème* of the aristocracy, who themselves were protected by the Royal Guard. The members of the Church brought up the rear. An enormous crowd accompanied the procession through the centre of the Villa and crowded



Baltasar Méndez de Loyola, previously known as Muhammad al-Attaz, was a Moroccan prince who became a Jesuit missionary. He became so famous in Italy converting Muslim slaves and exiles to Christianity that when he died in Madrid in 1667, he was given honours of State. On converting to Christianity, he took the name of the Knight of Malta who captured him on his way to Mecca (Balthazar Mandols) and of the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignacio de Loyola. [Image: A. Hamy, *Galerie illustrée de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 1838]

out the Church, some perched on top of the confessionals, or in alcoves and cornices. These ceremonies, which represented a symbolic triumph of Christianity over its great rival, were a popular, massively attended spectacle, in which participants were easily transported to the verge of rapture.

Given all this pressure, why didn't all the slaves convert? Their reluctance to convert was understandable. Although the slaves improved their status by converting to Christianity, maintaining their faith was also a form of resistance and dignity in what was a difficult situation. In addition, conversion closed the door on the chance of legally returning to their homeland if at some stage they were freed. It was not uncommon for slaves to be given their freedom when they reached a certain age or when their master so provided in his will. In these cases, for a freed slave to try to return home after having converted was a serious offence, as it meant reneging on their Christian faith and indicated that they preferred to live as *Moors* rather than as Christians. In 1541, Juan de Aguilar, also known as Juan de Marruecos, a man "of Arabic nation"⁵⁹ and a freed slave of the Marquis of Aguilar was accused in Alcalá de Henares of hatching a plan to flee to the land of Islam together with other Morisco slaves. Juan was

originally from “Marruecos” (or Morocco – the name then used for the city of Marrakech) and had been captured and enslaved in Azamor (Azemmour), a city on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, which was then a Portuguese colony and a slave port. The following year Juan de Azamor, who lived in the Parish of San Martín found himself in the same situation. He was a freed slave who had once belonged to Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, who with other slaves and their families and with the aid of Moriscos from Madrid and Toledo devised a plan to escape to Valencia, where they would catch a ship to Barbary. Their plan was foiled at the last moment, when Juan returned to Madrid to rescue his son Antón, who was a slave to a lady, and take him with them.

In order to avoid obstacles of this kind, some slaves chose not to convert. In 1640 for example, a “Moor of nation”⁶⁰ called Hamete, who was originally from Algeria and lived in the Calle de la Estrella, appeared before the Inquisition to ask for permission to return to his homeland, for which purpose he declared that he was a Muslim and had never converted to Christianity. That same year, another Algerian called Hametillo, a neighbour of Hamete, declared before the Holy Office that “they had been unable to reduce him to the Catholic faith although they had tried to persuade him to do so”,⁶¹ as a result of which he applied for a passport for himself and his wife, who was also Muslim. He also complained that their son had been stolen from them and baptized with the sole objective of preventing them from taking him with them. In 1643, another three freed slaves, “Moors of nation”,⁶² called Alife, Fata and Susa, who lived in the Plaza de Santa Bárbara and the Postigo de San Martín, requested a licence to return to their homeland.

Nonetheless, conversions did take place and sometimes were quite outlandish. Jerónimo de Barrionuevo, in the famous *Avisos* issued by the Dean of Zaragoza to inform him of what went on in the Court, stated that on Good Friday in 1658, next to the convent of La Encarnación, a slave spontaneously converted on seeing the procession go past: “He said that he wanted to be a Christian, and as a sign that he felt so in his heart, he cut off the lock of hair growing in the middle of his head and threw himself at the feet of the Mother of God and from then on helped to carry the float”.⁶³ In 1665, a slave belonging to the Marquis of Colares called Amete (Ahmed) was baptised on his deathbed, under pressure to do so from those around him. In the end, however, he did not die and on regaining his health he found that he was now known as Pedro and was obliged to practice a faith in which he clearly did not believe, as a result of which he was interrogated by the Inquisition for his lack of enthusiasm in Catholicism.

The vast majority of slaves are anonymous, only appearing perhaps in sales documents, baptism records and Inquisition proceedings. One of the few exceptions was Juan de Pareja, a slave belonging to the painter Diego de Velázquez, who lived with him at Court and assisted him in his workshop at the Palace. Juan had been born a slave in Antequera, the son of an African slave woman who was a Morisca (a Muslim who had converted to Christianity) and possibly of her Spanish owner. Although Juan had a love of painting, his master refused to let him use his brushes, as he considered him

unworthy of them. Juan somehow managed to learn to paint by watching Velázquez at work in his workshop and when he felt he had acquired sufficient skill, he then painted a picture and dreamt up a way for the King to see it and appreciate it. His plan proved successful, as when the King saw the picture, he ordered that the slave be given his freedom. Velázquez painted a portrait of him in 1650.

Another interesting character, who like Juan de Pareja once walked the streets of Madrid, was Elena or Eleno de Céspedes, who like Juan de Pareja, had inherited the slave status of her African Muslim mother and was the illegitimate daughter of her Spanish master. She was freed when she was eight and married at age fifteen, but after a while left her home town and set off on a life of wandering in which she performed various different trades using a masculine identity and the name Eleno. With this new identity, she (or perhaps he) settled in Madrid, where she learnt surgery and practised as a surgeon in the city and surrounding areas, and even married a woman in the



Juan de Pareja, Barbary slave belonging to the artist Velázquez, painted by his master in 1650. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

village of Yepes in 1585. The priest became suspicious, but Eleno somehow managed to convince Doctor Francisco Díaz, a surgeon to King Philip II, to certify that she was male. However, she continued to arouse suspicion and finally she was tried and convicted by the Inquisition.

The renegades

As well as Moriscos and slaves, in 16th and 17th century Spain there were other foreigners of certain rank who arrived on the Iberian Peninsula for a range of reasons, some as prisoners of war whose captors hoped to exchange them and others who were fleeing from political or economic difficulties in their homelands. In this way African and sometimes Turkish Muslims arrived on the Peninsula and created a new form of Islam, which had its counterpart in the Christian slaves, captives and renegades held in Islamic countries. The presence of these Muslims (who often never returned to their homelands) offered a discordant note in a Spain that had gone to great lengths to persecute the Moriscos. These Muslims however were not forced to convert



Muley Xequé, “son of the King of Morocco”, baptized in El Escorial and well-known resident of the Barrio de las Letras or Writers’ District. [Engraving: Giacomo Argentinis]

and the practice of their religion was tolerated to a certain degree (for example, in 1703 the Holy Office prohibited the baptism of the children of Muslims against the wishes of their parents, unless the children were in danger of dying). Even so they were subject to repeated forms of persuasion, as for the Church winning over new souls was one of the most important ideological triumphs to which the monarchy could aspire and baptisms were one of the most popular public spectacles, attended by enormous crowds, as we saw earlier.

This is what happened with most famous convert in the Villa, the Moroccan Emir Mulay al-Shaykh or Muley Xequé, who was baptized in El Escorial on 3rd November 1593 under the name Felipe de África after his godfather, Philip II. A son of the Sultan, Muley Xequé took exile in Spain as a way of escaping from the dynastic struggles in Morocco. After two decades in exile and undoubtedly having lost all hope of returning one day to his home, he asked to be accepted into the Catholic faith. While the preparations were being made for this most solemn ceremony, in which the Castilian aristocracy took part (it was not every day that a descendant of the Prophet was baptized a Christian), Muley Xequé lived with his numerous entourage in Valdemorillo, where today there is a street called Calle Don Felipe de África in his memory. He then moved to Madrid where he was granted the aristocratic title of Grande de España and an excellent monetary allowance, which allowed him to become one of the best-known characters in the Villa. So much so that Lope de Vega, who was a friend of his and a witness at his baptism, wrote a comedy and a sonnet in his honour. The Black Prince, as he was known by his neighbours because of his dark skin, was something of a celebrity for the *madrileños* and this was why the street where he lived became known as the Calle del Príncipe (Street of the Prince), a name it still retains today, even though the modern street sign bears the face of Philip II. The Palace of Santoña, on the corner of this street with the Calle Huertas, occupies the site of the mansion that once was home to this exile, a great lover of the theatre and of dancing.

There were other similar characters. The presence of Muslim noblemen in Madrid had begun early with the sons of Abu l-Hasan (also known as *Muley Hacén* in Spanish), the Sultan of Granada and the father of Boabdil, who had been educated at the court and had met Hieronymus Münzer in 1499: “we also saw two sons of the last King of Granada, brave young men who are very well instructed in our religion and are good Christians. The older one is called Fernando and the younger one is

Juan”.⁶⁴ There is also the case of a princess from Tunisia who entered a convent in Madrid in 1534 and of another young girl, called Ana who was the daughter of an Algerian nobleman and who entered the monastery of San Francisco in 1543. Later, Philip II offered shelter at the Court to the son of the Sultan of Tlemcen, who was baptized with the name of Carlos de África and later became a Knight of the Order of Santiago.

In 1601, Uruj Beg Bayat, one of the secretaries of the diplomatic mission sent by the Shah Abbas of Persia to the court of Philip III, decided not to return to his home country and to settle in Spain where he was baptised, taking the name of Juan de Persia. He died in 1604 in one of the many brawls that took place on the streets of Madrid, but in the meantime had time to write a book entitled *Relaciones de don Juan de Persia* (The Account of John of Persia) in which he offered geographical and ethnographical information about his home country, told the story of the Safavid dynasty, the rulers of Persia at that time, and finished with the story of the journey they had made on the diplomatic mission from Isfahan to Valladolid (where the Spanish court was situated between 1601 and 1606), through Russia, Eastern Europe and Italy, skirting around the north side of the Ottoman



The Barrio de las Letras (Writers' District) as seen on the map by Teixeira (1656). On the left, between the Calle Huertas and the Calle Príncipe, the Palace of Don Felipe de África. Also visible are the House of Cervantes on the corner of Calle Mentidero (today Calle León) and Calle Francos (today Calle Cervantes); the House of Lope de Vega in Calle Francos; the House of Quevedo in Calle Cantarranas (today Calle Lope de Vega), and opposite it the Convent of Las Trinitarias, the nuns who paid the ransom to secure the release of Cervantes from Algiers. On the right of the map, the vast palace of the Duke of Lerma, the man responsible for the expulsion of the Moriscos. [Image: Daniel Gil-Benumeja]

Empire, who were political and religious rivals of the Safavids. Compared to the other Muslims who had converted to Christianity, Juan de Persia was unusual in that he came from the Shi'ite branch of Islam, the official branch in Persia, rather than from the Sunni, the majority branch of Islam in the Mediterranean at that time.

Around the same time, there is a record in Los Carabancheles of “a Moorish *alcaide* who lived within his law and was said to be the Prince of Morocco”.⁶⁵ His high rank—he was said to have been a Governor or Judge of Meknes—and his status as a foreign hostage were what allowed him to “live within his law”, that is to continue practising his Islamic religion openly, even though the authorities were concerned about the influence he might have, as he received visits from Moriscos. We do not know what became of him. In 1636, the grandson of the Sultan Mulay Zaydan of Morocco was baptized in the Palace in Madrid under the auspices of the Patriarch of the Indias, Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, and accompanied by King Philip IV and the Count Duke of Olivares, Gaspar de Guzmán, which is why the new Christian took the name Felipe Gaspar Alonso de Guzmán. Another Moroccan nobleman, called Mulay Ahmad al-Abbas or Muley Hamet, lived in Getafe

where there is a street named after him. A report written in 1648 complained that he lived a poor, neglected man in spite of being a person of great standing and an ally of the Spanish Crown, which is probably why he moved to the Court and was baptized with the name of Felipe de África, the second princely convert of that name. He may well have been the “Prince of Morocco” to whom Jerónimo de Barrionuevo referred to in 1656, in whose house a man had been arrested for being a *margaritón* or pimp: “In the house of the Prince of Morocco, who lives in San Andrés, and who about eight years ago came to be baptized, they took out a man wearing the long habits of a student,



The Calle Felipe de África, in Getafe, named after Mulay Ahmad al-Abbas, a Moroccan exile during the reign of King Philip IV. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

who was accused of being a pimp and an arranger of meetings with whores, a business in which one can earn a hundred per cent and often 200 [lashes] on the back”.⁶⁶ It was not uncommon for noblemen, foreign or otherwise, to take part in businesses such as smuggling or prostitution, as they did not work and their private incomes did not always cover the many expenses arising from their high social status.

Many years later another Moroccan exiled died in Madrid. The many vicissitudes he encountered were recounted by the Spanish playwright Calderón de la Barca in his play *El gran príncipe de Fez* (The Great Prince of Fez). His name was Muhammad al-Attaz and he was captured by a ship with a letter of marque from the Order of Malta when he was making his pilgrimage to Mecca. He was taken prisoner and made a slave in Italy, where for several years he resisted the pressure to convert to Christianity. But when at last his ransom was paid and the time came for him to return



The Palace of Santoña, on the corner of Calle Huertas and Calle Príncipe, the site of the house that was once the residence of Muley Xequé. [Photo: Javier Sánchez]

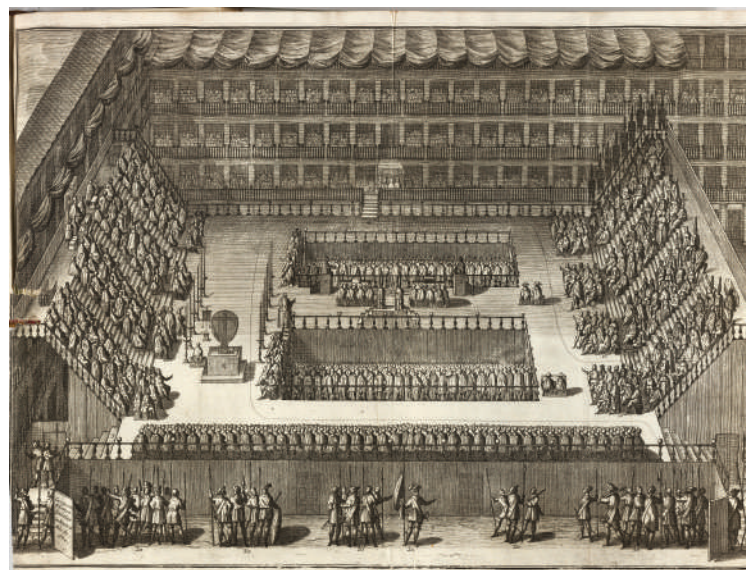
home, he decided unexpectedly to embrace the Christian faith and asked to join the Society of Jesus. Baltasar Méndez de Loyola, as he was known from then on, became a zealous preacher of the Gospel amongst the Muslim captives. He was already quite famous when he arrived in Madrid in August 1667 on his way to Lisbon where he intended to embark for India. Unfortunately, after a few days in Madrid he fell ill and died, although he still had time to convert one last slave on his deathbed. In his funeral and burial service, celebrated at the Imperial College of Madrid (today the Instituto de San Isidro), he received the same honours as Philip IV, who had died two years earlier. Lastly, we should mention the strange case of four families of freed Muslims, who lived in the Calle del Leal (today called Torrecilla del Leal), who asked to be baptised in the Parish of San Sebastián between 1663 and 1664. In total there were 34 of them about whom we know nothing else: where they came from, why they were living in Madrid or what happened to them after their brief entry into parish records.

All of these people had counterparts in the people who have entered Spanish history as “renegades”. These were Christians who arrived in Barbary in similar circumstances (exile, being taken prisoner, interests or beliefs) and on occasions converted to Islam. If fate later returned these converts to Christian territory, their conversion could cost them dear. This was what happened for example to a man from Madrid called Pedro Martínez who in 1567 confessed to the Inquisition that he had converted to Islam during the two and a half years that he was held prisoner in Algeria, where he married another convert called Ana. He claimed that both of them had been pressured into converting and that they had done so to improve their living conditions. In 1609 six Madrid residents from different backgrounds were put on trial. They had all been captured by the Turks and sold as slaves in Barbary, where after a time they had embraced Islam.

In the huge *auto da fe* held in the Plaza Mayor in 1680, which was painted by Francisco Rizi, a man by the name of “Lázaro Fernández, *alias* Mostafá, who was born in the city of Cádiz, a renegade who went privateering, of twenty-eight years old, was found guilty of belonging to the sect of Muhammad”.⁶⁷ In this case he had not only become a Muslim, but had also participated in acts of piracy against Spaniards, although he was tried and sentenced to death at the stake for the first offence. The use of Europeans in piracy on the other side of the Mediterranean was in fact quite common. One example was the Dutchman Ivan Dirkie de Veenboer, a famous corsair who

fought under the Turkish name of Süleyman Reis and died near Cartagena in 1620, or his sidekick, also a Dutchman, Jan Janszoon, alias Murad Rais, who was one of the best-known leaders of the Republic of Salé, a pirate state on the Moroccan coast, that was founded by Moriscos expelled from Hornachos (Badajoz) and attracted all kinds of adventurers.

Even Cervantes, who was held prisoner for five years in Algeria (which had an enormous influence on his work), must have been suspected of having reneged on his Catholic faith, such that he felt the need to write a detailed history of his time in captivity in which he claimed to have tried to escape four times, so as to dispel any possible doubts. The arrivals of prisoners rescued (or ransomed) from the clutches of Islam were like all things related to the Catholic faith an event of some note. Although at times they had to be dressed up a bit, as in this news report from 1658 by Jerónimo de Barrionuevo: “various Christian captives fleeing from Algiers have arrived here, claiming that and bringing with them the effigy of a monster that was discovered in those parts, like a man of extraordinary ferocity, with many hands and feet, and a half moon on his chest, and with an M in the middle”.⁶⁸ This kind of false reporting about monstrous creatures from far-off lands was very frequent at that time and had the same purpose as today’s fake news: in addition to entertaining an audience that was more likely to believe than to question, they also served to demonize whoever the current enemies were. In this case, the Muslims, as can be seen from the reference to the half-moon and to the M, the initial letter of Muhammad.



Auto da fe held in the Plaza Mayor in Madrid. The Inquisition was an essential weapon in the elimination of religious diversity and in the repression of any kind of social dissidence. Engraving by Gregorio Fosman (1680).

The end of Islam in Madrid

The Moriscos in the strict sense of the word, i.e. the descendants of Andalusians who had been obliged to convert to Christianity at the beginning of the 16th century, managed to conserve the dying embers of the faith of their ancestors for a further hundred years, until the King decided to expel them all en masse. Why? The Moriscos were not a problem for the Catholic faith, given that it was impossible for any closet Muslim to preach, nor did they pose any possible “security” risks as might be argued today, in spite of the sporadic contacts that the Moriscos on the Mediterranean coast may have had with the Maghreb, and which seem totally understandable given the repression and harassment to which they were subjected. In fact they were the same old reasons that lie behind all forms of institutional racism: the need to fabricate an internal enemy and a non-existent danger, so as to win the support or at least the indifference of the people towards such a corrupt regime as that of Philip III and his favourite, the Duke of Lerma. It is ironic that after meting out such severe punishment to those who tried to emigrate to Islamic countries for their alleged apostasy, it was now the Spanish government itself that made this emigration obligatory, and which involved de facto their renouncement of the Christian religion.

The decision to expel all the Moriscos was taken in 1609 and was carried out in several phases until 1612. The Moriscos from the Madrid region set off on their journey into exile via Cartagena or France (from which they were supposed to leave for Barbary) in 1610. However, amongst their number there were very few Moriscos from the city of Madrid itself, given that due to the intense, chaotic growth in the city in the previous decades, finding them was like looking for a needle in a haystack. The Count of Salazar, the man in charge of this forced exile, wrote in 1611: “in this Villa there are 50 houses with Moriscos from Granada who have registered, many of whom wish to remain as good Christians, but many of the older ones have decided not to register, so we do not how many of them there are. They are very rich and have many people that help them and provide cover for them”.⁶⁹ In other words, fifty families from Granada had managed to avoid the first expulsions in spite of being registered in the census and apparently all or almost all of the “Old” Moriscos from Madrid were sufficiently well integrated as to make it impossible for the authorities to register them as such.

Although the King ordered “that great care be taken to ensure that all the Moriscos in this Court leave”,⁷⁰ the official total of Moriscos expelled from Madrid was just 369, far fewer than the 1487 Moriscos registered in the census of 1581, a number that may well have increased during the intervening thirty years. There was also the fact that from the moment the expulsions began, Moriscos from all over began to descend on Madrid to present allegations, to such an extent that the courts were snowed under and the streets of the Villa were filled with Moriscos. Some of the most unusual cases included those who came to Madrid to present certificates attesting their noble status which linked them to the elite of the Kingdom of Granada or even to the Umayyads of Cordoba, in an attempt to take advantage of the legal loopholes that offered certain privileges to nobles of whatever religious confession. Others carried certificates of good conduct issued by the priests from their parishes or of kinship with “Old Christians”. Many took the opportunity to discreetly blend in with the inhabitants of the Villa and stayed there. Finally, other Moriscos managed to return to Spain after their expulsion under false identities, a practice that was well known at the time and was mentioned by Cervantes in a character called Ricote, who was a neighbour of Sancho Panza.



Woman from Madrid, painted by Roger de Gaignières in 1572. In spite of the repression of the Moriscos, many Andalusian cultural practices had become firmly rooted in Christian society and were deliberately and painstakingly erased over the course of the Early Modern Era.



Peasant of Castile, as depicted by Christoph Weiditz in 1529. The turban or “travelling head-dress” was a sign of the cultural mix that the Austrias so disliked.

As time went by, the Moriscos who had managed to escape the expulsion or had returned from it gradually diluted themselves within society and disappeared from its collective memory. This disappearance was perhaps not so complete as to leave no trace. In 1690, the Moroccan ambassador to the court of Charles II, Abd al-Wahhab al Gassani, wrote that on his trip through Spain he had met various people who claimed, in secret, to be of Andalusian origin. These included a gentleman from Madrid called Don Alonso, who claimed to be descended from the Granada Royal family and “showed a liking for the Muslims that he met, mentioned his lineage and enjoyed hearing tales about Islam and its people”.⁷¹ In Madrid too, the Sultan’s delegation had a similar encounter with a “secretary of the government” who referring to himself and to the women who accompanied him said: “We are from the line of the Muslims, descendants of the Abencerrajes”.⁷² Other Moroccan ambassadors had similar encounters in the following century. Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos thought, and not with any admiration, that the famous *majos*, who lived in the poorest neighbourhoods of Madrid at that time, were of Morisco origin.

In short there was a long period in which Islam, its people and its celebrations could be considered a typical, authentic part of Madrid.

Muslims formed part of the history of the “Villa” for almost 800 years, from the foundation of the city in the 9th century right through until the 17th century, in which Islam as a religion and a residual cultural practice was timidly preserved by various unusual characters until it eventually disappeared. Today, this long Islamic legacy remains largely unknown to most *madrileños*. This is due both to the lack of material remains and to the symbolic problem arising from the fact that the capital of Spain, a country that has shaped itself around its Catholic identity, has Islamic origins. This is why our bid to recover this legacy has two main objectives. Firstly, to help preserve and disseminate an essential piece of the history of the city and secondly, something very necessary in these times of islamophobia and rejection of all things different, to defend diversity as an intrinsic, constituent characteristic of Madrid ever since its foundation, rather than as a new phenomenon imported by the migrants that arrived at the end of the 20th century, while recognizing the positive contribution they have made in reintroducing Islamic culture into Madrid, and in helping the city once again to enjoy the diversity and cultural mix on which it was built. “Natural” is what is diverse, what is changing, what is hybrid, and the labels and essentialisms are constructed later. Madrid, which opened up late to the cosmopolitanism that had been enjoyed by other European capitals for some long time, has the paradoxical richness of its cross-cultural origin. This is something which the multicultural Madrid of the 21st century should be interested in rediscovering. Rediscovering itself.

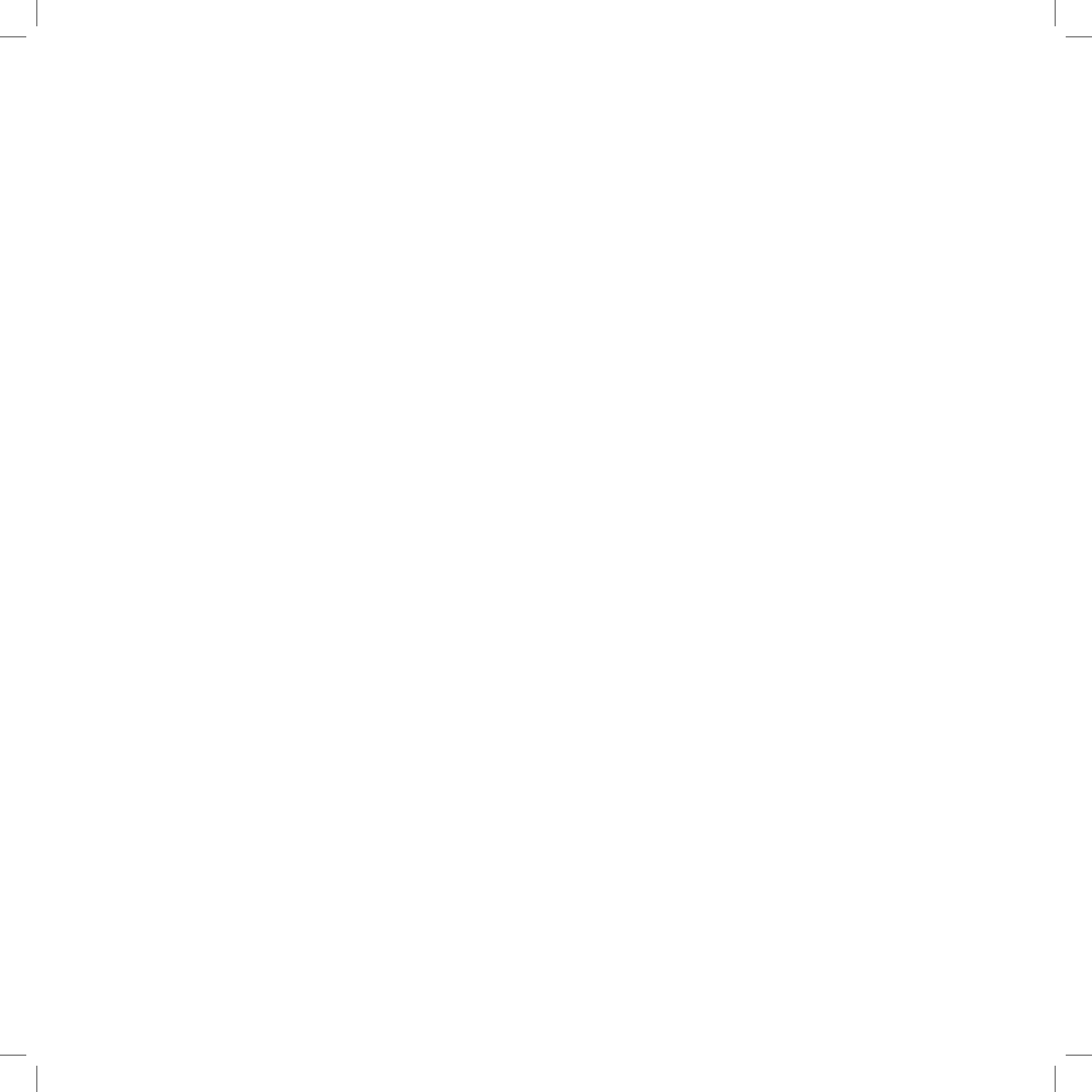
NOTES

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3. Translator's Note – al-Andalus was the Muslim name for the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages. The adjective "Andalusian" is used here to refer to the people of al-Andalus or to things pertaining to it.
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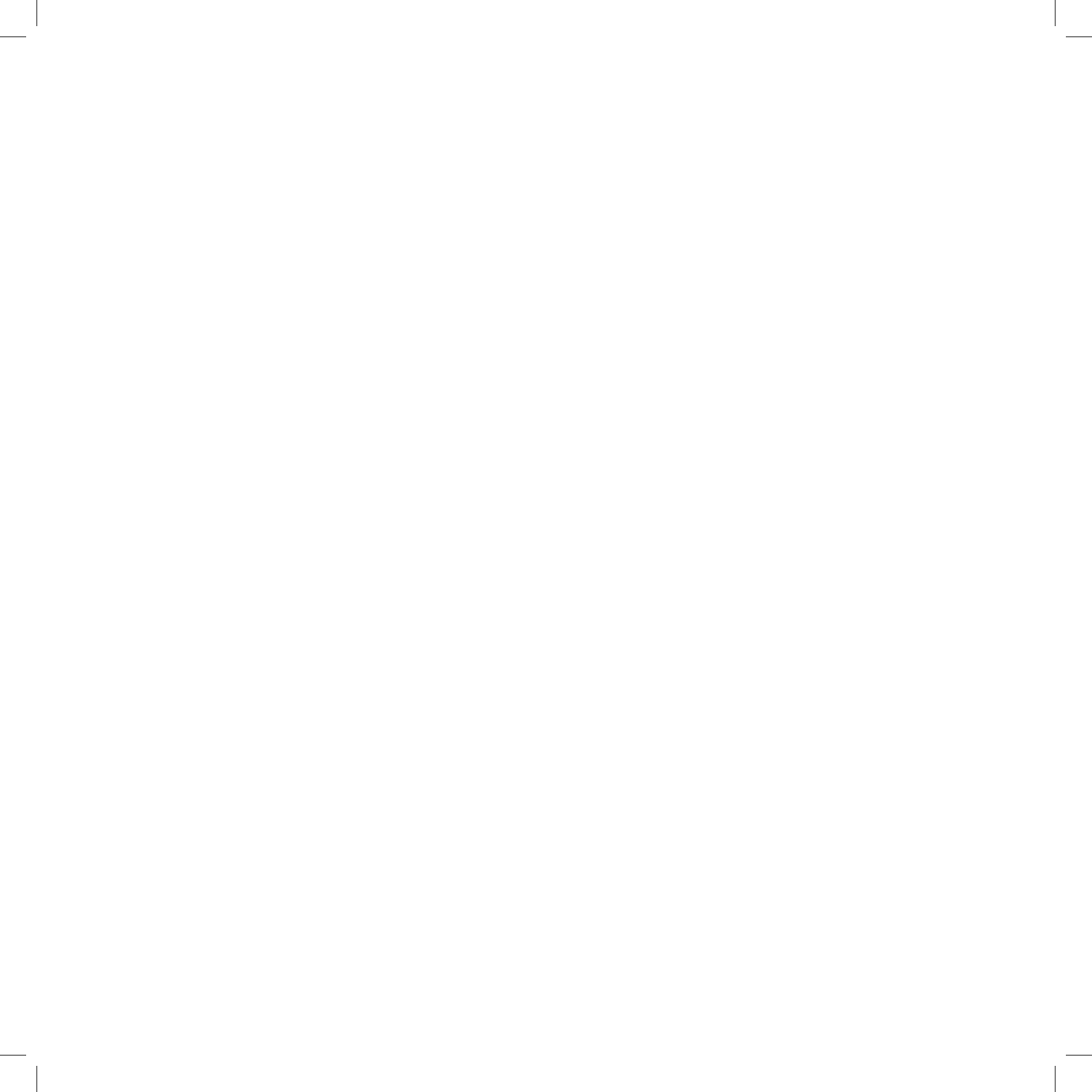
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18. Mahmud 'Ali Makki, "A propósito de la revolución de 'Ubayd Allah ibn al-Mahdi en Madrid", *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, vol. IX-X, 1961-1962, pp. 258-259
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70. Henri Lapeyre, *Geografía de la España morisca*, Valencia: Universitat de València, 2009, p. 198.
71. Nieves Paradela: *El otro laberinto español: viajeros árabes a España entre el siglo XVII y 1936*, Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2005, p. 60.
72. Ibidem, p. 61.



The influence of Arabic in modern-day Spanish



“A la lima y al limón, que no tengo quien me quiera”, once sang Concha Piquer, so recovering a popular expression that also appeared in the children’s song “al alimón, al alimón, que se ha roto la fuente”. Although the words *lima* (lime) and *limón* (lemon) are words that entered Spanish through Arabic, in this expression they have nothing to do with citrus fruits and are in fact derived from the phrase used by town criers in al-Andalus at the start of their announcements: *a la alima l-alimun*, “Hear ye, so that those who must know will know...”. Although this expression is not in everyday use anymore, here are some other words and expressions from modern-day Spanish that are directly derived from Arabic:

Alcantarilla (drain).

Spanish diminutive of *al-qantara*, “the bridge”.

Alquiler.

Spanish word for rent from the Arabic *al-kira*.

Arre, borriquito.

Arre (gee up, donkey, gee up) is an onomatopoeic word of Arabic origin from which the words *arrear* (spur on) and *arriero* (mule-driver) are also derived. As mentioned earlier, the Moriscos were known for their nomadic lifestyles.

Arroba.

The Spanish name for the symbol @, which was once a unit of weight, comes from the Arabic *ar-rub*, which means “a quarter”.

Azotea (Roof terrace).

From *as-sutayha*, “the little roof”.

Barrio (Neighbourhood).

From *barri*, “exterior”, because originally the neighbourhoods lay outside the city walls in *arrabales* (*ar-rabad*).

Bellota (Acorn).

Bellota comes from *balluta* the Arabic word for “acorn”.

Café (Coffee).

The word “café” or “coffee” comes from the Arabic *qahwa*, entering Spanish not through al-Andalus but from the Turkish *kahve*.

Cero (Zero).

Cero comes from *sifr*, also the root of another Spanish word *cifra*.

Chupa (Leather jacket).

From *jubba*, overcoat, from which the archaic Spanish words *aljuba* and *jubón* also derived.

Dar la matraca (To be a pain).

Matraca means “hammer”.

De marras (Same old).

Marra means “time”, so the expression “la cosa de marras” would mean “something we have talked about time and time again”.

En balde o de balde (In vain).

From the Arabic *batil*, “useless, vain”.

Erre que erre (Insistently).

In the Arabic spoken in al-Andalus *Hirr* was a vulgar expression meaning the same as the most commonly used swear word in modern-day Spanish. So *erre que erre* (or *herre que herre*, as it used to be spelt) refers to insisting on something by swearing repeatedly.

Fulano y mengano (So and So).

Fulan means “somebody”, and *man kan*, “whoever”.

¡Hasta luego! (See you later).

Even some prepositions are of Arabic origin. *Hasta*, comes from *hatta*, meaning *until*.

Irse de farra (Hit the town).

There are two possibilities: *farra* in Arabic means “flee”, although it might also come from *farha*, meaning “joy or merriment”. Both fit the modern-day meaning.

Jaque mate (Check mate).

From *ash-shah mat*, “the King —or to be more precise, the Shah, Persian Emperor— is dead”.

Jarra (Jug or Large Glass).

From *jarra*. And if you use the jug for beer, remember that you are drinking *al-kohl*, the name of the powder used in eye make-up and by extension any substance obtained by crushing or distilling.

Mamarracho (Jerk or Idiot).

From *muharrraj*, “buffoon”.

Mogollón (Lots, Loads).

From the Catalan *mogobells*, “tip”, which came from the Arabic *muqabil*, “compensation”.

Mojama (Cured tuna).

Mojama comes from *mushamma*’, which means “made wax”.

Mono, monada (Cute).

From *maymún*, “happy”.

No hay tu tía (To have no choice).

tutiya was a zinc oxide-based ointment which was used to treat eye diseases and eventually came to mean *remedy* or *solution* in general.

Ojalá (If only – I wish).

From *law sha Allah*, “God willing”.

Olé!

One of the best-known Spanish words internationally comes from *w(a) Allah!*, which means “By God!”.

Ponerse farruco (Get cocky).

From *farrukh*, “cock”.

¡Qué jeta! (What a cheek!).

Jeta, a colloquial Spanish word for *face*, comes from the Arabic *khatm*, which means “snout” or “beak”.

¡Qué salada eres!

(How charming you are!). *Sal* (salt) and *salado* (salty) come from Latin, but *salada* in this case is borrowed from the Arabic *malih*, which means “charming”, “good” or “nice”.

Sandía (Watermelon).

The most popular fruit in the hot Madrid summer was apparently brought here from Sind in Pakistan. Hence the name *sindiyya*.

Sofá (Sofa).

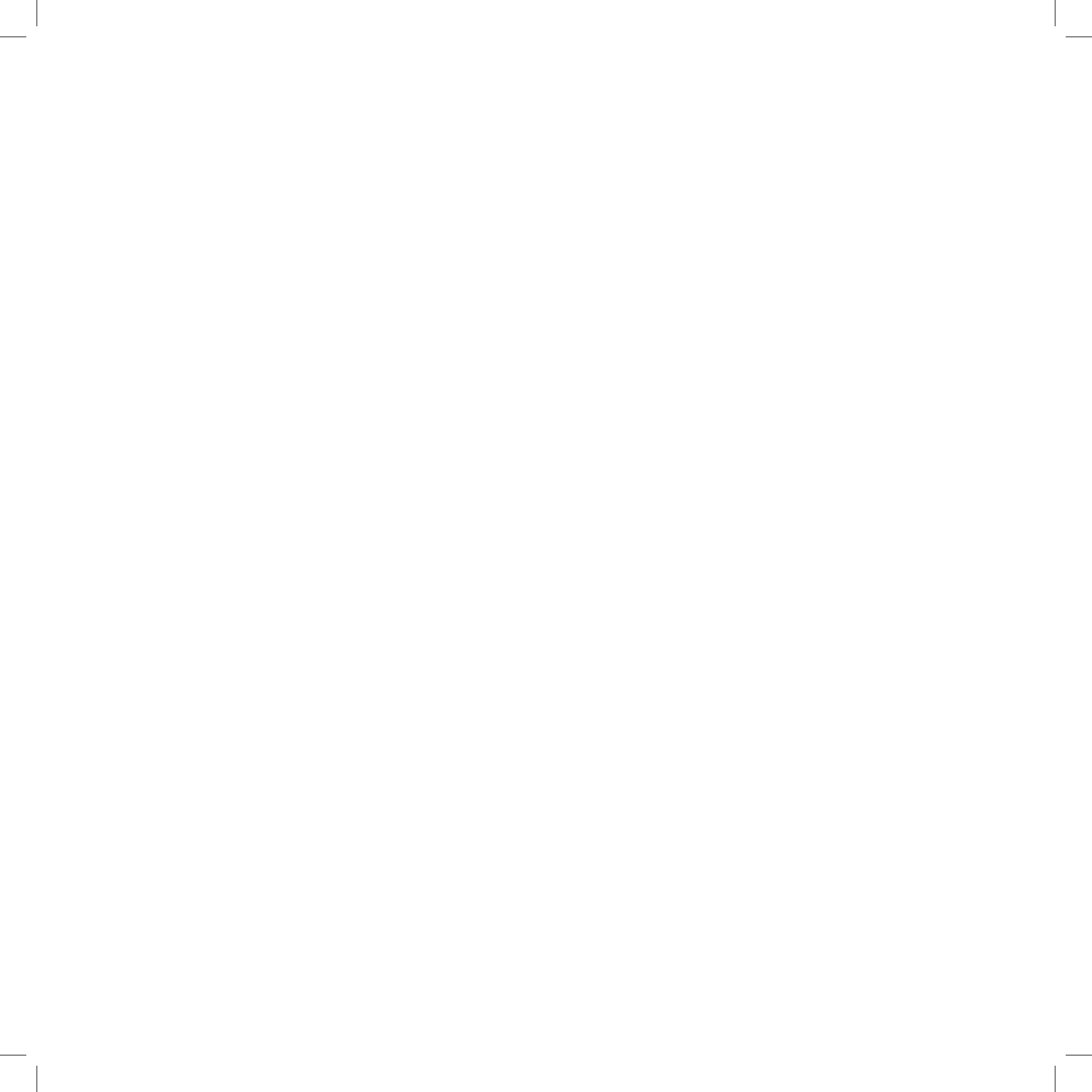
The best place to spend a Sunday comes from *suffa*, “large pillow”. And now we’re on the subject, the divan used by psychoanalysts also comes from Arabic (*diwan*).

Tabaco (Tobacco).

Tobacco comes from America, but the name *tubbaq* was once used to describe all sedative plants.

Taquilla (Ticket office or window).

Spanish diminutive of the Arabic *taqa*, “window”. Prices are clearly displayed in ticket offices, perhaps because *tariff* comes from *ta’rifa*, “that which is made public”.



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